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News. Clues. Kingdom views.

CHRISTIAN COURIER

Christian school graduates are 'salt of the earth,' study says

Cardus releases new Canadian Education Survey data

Sean Schat

"[The] conclusions suggest that non-government schools are important contributors to education delivery in Canada and that they can be regarded to contribute to the public good" (CES Executive Summary, 5).

Do Christian schools deliver what they promise? What are Christian schools trying to do, and is it working? How do we know that Christian education is really worth doing? Is there an alignment between the motivations for Christian education and the outcomes of Christian education? What effects do non-government schools have on their graduates, and how do they differ from government school outcomes?

These are some of the essential questions that prompted Cardus, a Christian think-tank, to embark on a landmark research study into Christian education in North America. It's the first time in the history of Christian education in the United States and Canada that an extended, research-based study has focused on the actual, measureable impact of Christian education on its students. Drawing on mission and vision documents from Christian schools across North America, Cardus identified three primary outcomes: spiritual formation, cultural engagement and academic development. Reporting on these outcomes formed the structure of the recent Cardus publication and presentation.

On September 26, an audience of over 250 attended Cardus's first Canadian Education Survey (CES) data release at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. Over the next few months, results will be shared in a number of communities across Canada. Cardus has also released a detailed report, as well as other related publications (**cardus.ca**). Last year, Cardus published a U.S. version of the same survey, but the Canadian results are notably different.

Pennings brought the research to life. MIKE ZWIEP

The Cardus survey is based on rigorous research and analysis. Cardus contracted with Angus Reid (data collection) and Notre Dame University (survey design and data analysis) to ensure excellence and credibility. The data was collected in March 2012, and involved 2,054 graduates of Canadian Secondary schools between the ages of 24 and 39.

Mostly good news

The Cardus report is good news for supporters of Canadian non-government schools, for the most part. In his presentation, Ray Pennings, Director of Research, unfolded a fascinating narrative of five fictional students, each based on the unique profile the study revealed about five types of non-government Canadian school traditions: Protestant Christian, Separate Catholic, Independent Catholic, Independent Non-Religious and Religious Home Educated. Pennings followed each of the five "students" through the three primary outcomes, reflecting briefly on results along the way. The results are revealing and significant for each of these unique demographics. This article will focus on Protestant Christian schools, which appear, overall, to accomplish what they intend to.

See **Graduates** *on page 2*

> *"[The] conclusions suggest that non-government schools . . . contribute to the public good."*

Breaking the silence: Critical conversations on Christian schooling

Mary Kooy

Although I attended a Christian elementary, high school and college, was a Christian schoolteacher and sent our children to Christian schools, I have, over the years, become less convinced that Christian education is either necessary or viable. This shift developed as my educational journey evolved. In graduate school I met other skilled scholars in education – many of them outstanding educators – who introduced new-to-me theories and approaches to education. New questions emerged. The world that had at one time been clearly marked as white (us) and black (them) slowly faded.

For a time, I listened and learned. Steeped in conceptions and a language of schooling not familiar or accessible to my colleagues, I had to learn, to undo and reconstruct my own understanding and frame it in language for authentic conversation. Clarifying what I actually understood and believed was puzzling and painful at times, even unsettling, yet at the same time it was stimulating and beneficial. The gap between my academic and Christian school colleagues widened. Ultimately, we spoke a different language. Nevertheless, my work in education continues and remains central in my life; I am an educational scholar deeply interested in learning and teaching. The evolution continues.

Declining enrollments plague Christian school communities.

Watch your language

The language issue remains. Christian school "insiders" use a particular language (much of it biblical and, therefore, beyond debate) that those outside the circle

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News

Graduates *continued*

Spiritual formation

Religion plays an important role in the daily life of Christian school graduates. They believe their high school prepared them well for a vibrant religious and spiritual life. They regularly practice spiritual disciplines, attend church and pray together as a family. They experience deep communion with God, share their faith with friends and family and make decisions about right and wrong based on God and his Word. They marry younger, divorce less and tend to have more children. Faith is clearly seen as a resource for facing the challenges of life.

Cultural engagement

Cultural engagement is a fascinating dimension for our schools to consider. On the one hand, Christian school graduates are very active in their church communities, are environmentally aware and are more likely to tithe than other survey demographics. Many Protestant Christian school graduates seek jobs that fulfill a religious calling. They do not believe religion is a private matter. However, Christian school graduates were not as culturally engaged as some of the other groups. What was particularly interesting was that Christian graduates are more likely to perceive a climate hostile to their moral and spiritual values, and yet they are still committed to participate, volunteer and donate at an equal or greater rate than others. They are committed to making a difference in the world, even when they feel rejected or overlooked by it.

Academic development

The survey's insights into academic development are intriguing, and demand further investigation by those involved in the Christian education project. Graduates of these schools are less likely to go beyond high school than the other demographics. However, when they do move on, they are more likely to pursue a Master's Degree, but less likely to attain a PhD. It appears that Protestant Christian school graduates tend to settle down, start families and begin their careers.

As he approached his conclusion, Pennings paused to capture the gist of each student profile. Protestant Christian school grads are "salt of the earth people." They can be described as "satisfactory" in all three outcomes: the most likely to have a family and children, academically "middling," strong in faith and lifelong religious habits, with a vibrant, living faith that is not restricted to private life. For the most part, this is encouraging. Indeed, in many ways Christian schools are doing exactly what their founders and support communities hoped they would do.

Penning's final conclusion is an important one. Christian school graduates significantly contribute to the public good. He cited the Ontario Education Act, which declares that "the purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society." In fact, Protestant Christian school graduates often demonstrate these characteristics to a greater extent than other graduates. This is an important distinction for private Christian school communities to note, but also one that needs to be heard in the public forum. It confronts common misperceptions about Christian schools and their students. Protestant Christian school graduates contribute actively and positively to the Canadian public good. They are a blessing to others.

What's next? Personal reflections

The release of this study should spark important conversations across the continent. Fellow teachers and I were encouraged by the survey's results, and the affirmation that our schools are meeting many of their most important goals and objectives. We were not surprised to hear that our graduates are being equipped to contribute meaningfully to our wider culture, even if they are not always received and perceived in this way.

There are, of course, a number of concerns and questions. Why aren't Christian school graduates more culturally engaged? Why don't more of them seek higher levels of academia? Why does creativity appear to be undervalued? Why are Christian schools so poorly perceived by the general public? How can these results be used to address these perceptions? How were factors such as family and community demographics factored into the study and analysis? Will present educational practice allow Christian schools to match or exceed these results? What other questions should the study prompt Christian school communities and leaders to ask?

The report and related resources are available online at **cardus.ca/research/education**

Perhaps the most significant concern is that the survey is describing the past, not the present. The participants in the study were 25 to 39 years old, and last attended high school a decade ago. Much has changed in the educational landscape – indeed, in many ways a paradigm shift is taking place. For example, in Ontario, most Christian secondary school programs have been shaped and informed by Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum policy documents since 2000 (and other provinces have experienced similar shifts). These curriculum program policy documents have been well-informed by educational, cognitive and neurodevelopmental research. In theory, educators should be "teaching better." But what does "teaching better" mean? Are we doing a better job when it comes to cultural engagement and participation?

My own experiences as a Christian high school Bible teacher in Ontario have been encouraging. My students have demonstrated an awareness of a need for more authentic cultural engagement. Whether this translates into action is still to be determined. However, many of the young people I have worked with bear an emerging resemblance to what Gabe Lyons recently described as *The Next Christians* (2010), seeking to find ways to participate authentically and meaningfully in their culture and communities. It's an exciting and important moment in the history of Christian education in North America. I am curious to see where the dialogue goes from here. How can Christian schools make sure that they keep this central: providing a distinctively Christian education, while still providing an educationally excellent, culturally relevant learning experience for their children?

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Conversations *continued*

do not understand. Dialogue becomes impossible. Those *not* using the same language (educational discourse instead, for example) become the "other," the excluded outsider, the silenced voices. This facile dismissal of those who do not define education precisely in the same terms is a great loss to the larger (Reformed) Christian community. Insider language, repeated over generations, becomes a jargonized version of reality and makes a significant assumptive leap that all share the same understanding of the language. Most unfortunately, this negatively impacts supporters of Christian education who end up "preaching to the choir."

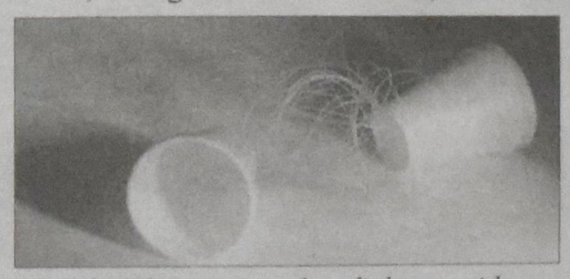
When I have given talks at Christian school conventions, I have been puzzled by the pervasive Biblical language that seems to dominate (a Bible verse as theme, for instance). Teachers gather in praise and worship, and I wonder, "How would I know this is about schooling and education? How would anyone distinguish between this and church?" Such language can hardly be called *inappropriate*. Yet, ultimately, it is. That's the point: church and school are distinctive entities even in the language and practices used to describe them.

We need to look for the outcome and impact of losing sight of our Reformed (and Reforming) heritage, and revive Kuyper's conception of "sphere sovereignty" by asking: What specific characteristics identify this as school? What marks of its identity distinguish it from other institutions (church, hospital, law firm)? This challenging and difficult task is more so given that, over time, a default mode emerges – school, you know, is school!

New language for new times in Christian schooling

Yet the need for clarity and renewed vision in a rapidly changing world remains. As a current example, declining enrolments currently plague much of the Christian school community. Many have shifted to survival methods, using some measures that make strange bedfellows with Christian education from a Reformed perspective (traditional pedagogy, fund raisers, hiring financial whizzes).

Subtly, the focus begins to shift. The pull to become an *über* form of public school (boasting about test scores; proclaiming a "phonics" approach to reading; and/or "streaming" to attract new students) takes hold to attract conservative Christians. The pressure to conform to traditional practices and "standards"– remarkably similar to those of public schooling – hangs over the schools like a pall. Solid Reformed thinking loses its grip ("It's only temporary"). Persistence on this path, however, is misguided, and leads to losses (What is given up?) and lostness (Where are we?). At the end of the day, it becomes a 'means justifying the ends' argument, hardly the stuff of sound Reformed thinking.



"Insider" language makes dialogue with those outside the faith community impossible.

Furthermore, if meaningful dialogue eludes even those in the (Reformed) faith community, what message does that convey? Failure to engage in dialogue with a diverse range of educators to unmask and confront the critical issues affecting education in a world changing at lightning speed suggests an inability to rethink and perhaps even revise and reconstruct knowledge. Regardless of the unflinching commitment to the cause, without due diligence and ongoing re-examination, it cannot be assumed that commitment causally leads to the desired destination. "It is time to recover our nerve and promote our schools for the 21st century. The current hospice mentality – watching our schools slowly die – must give way to a renewed confidence" (Archbishop Timothy Dolan, September 2010).

Speaking with the larger educational community

To find a shared language requires opening up and embracing space for interactive dialogue. When I re-read Isaiah 1:18, I found, in various biblical translations, calls to "reason together," "have an argument together," to "settle this," to "talk this over together," and, even, an admonition to "now let's discuss this." While there is a critical need for the faith community to communicate (as a model to our children and to those outside our communities), it is, at the end of the day, even more critical for those outside it. What must others think of our "God" language on schooling that fails to include them or even – dare I say it – learn from them through critical discussion on education? Why shrink from authentic, dynamic and even controversial debate (speaking *with* in order to speak *to*)? Are Christian schools singularly placed to speak

See **Conversations** *on page*

News

Mosque moves into former Christian school

Bethany Van Lingen

GUELPH, Ont. – There have been bumps in the road, but First Christian Reformed Church, Guelph Community Christian School (GCCS) and the Muslim Society of Guelph (MSOG) are learning how to be good neighbours.

The Christian school has moved from its location at 286 Water Street, which was across the road from First CRC in Guelph, Ont. The church and school have had close ties since the school started in 1961, and not only geographically. The school building was constructed and planned for, in part, by members of First CRC. By 2011, however, a student body of over 200 made it necessary for the school to relocate.

Meanwhile, the Muslim Society of Guelph, originally at 44 Melborough Road, had also outgrown its space. The parking lot was too small for visitors during Ramadan and Friday prayers. There were no extracurricular activities because there was no space to run them.

Consequently, the MSOG took interest when the building occupied by Guelph Community Christian School opened up. The Water Street building was the perfect size and location for the mosque, and it had more parking. The MSOG made a bid and was offered the property. When the Christian school formally closed on July 9, the MSOG started renovations right away. Services began at the mosque's new location on July 13.

Across town, Guelph Community Christian School re-opened in its new location in September – a renovated former public school.

New landscape

"I see this as an opportunity to learn about another group's faith and for both them and us to show love to our neighbours," Pastor David Tigchelaar of First CRC says. There have been some misunderstandings between the new neighbours, however, one of which involved parking.

The mosque had many extra visitors during Ramadan, which ran from July 19 to August 20 this year. Ramadan is a month of fasting in the Islamic calendar, and it also includes a great deal of prayer. The mosque is regularly open five times a day for prayer, but during Ramadan, many more people will take time to stop by even more frequently to pray.

At evening prayers during Ramadan this year, the mosque had 250 to 300 visitors a night. At their previous location, they had seen a maximum of 150 visitors a night. The new mosque's parking lot was overflowing. Consequently, the MSOG asked the church if they could use the First CRC parking lot during the evenings for the month. "We wanted to keep cars off the road," Sara Sayyed, a volunteer in programming at the MSOG, says.

This worked initially, but after two weeks, the leaders at First CRC became concerned about the Muslim Society of Guelph members using the church parking lot. The spaces were needed during weekday evenings for ministries run by the church. Church and mosque leaders talked about the use of the parking lot and the situation was resolved.

"There have been growing pains. But the leadership at the mosque received that news very well. They really wanted to be good neighbours. We set a boundary, which they appreciated," Tigchelaar says.

Future school?

Bob Moore, principal at GCCS, is glad to see the new use of his former school building. He is helping the Muslim Society of Guelph with their transition.

"They are trying to do the same thing we are. The building will continue to be used by people of faith and to nurture their children in faith," Moore says.

The school community helped the MSOG move in and Moore visited to see how things were going. The two organizations are still in touch.

Leaders at the mosque can now run extracurricular weekend activities and after-school programs for kids. In the future, mosque members hope to open an Islamic school. Moore says he has offered to help the MSOG leaders with forms and regulations when it comes time to start the Islamic school. Sayyed would love to see a partnership between the Islamic and Christian schools, such as running joint events.

"They are a great group [at GCCS]. I wish them all the best of luck with their new school," Sayyed says.

The community at the MSOG invited the members of First CRC and the Christian school over for a barbeque on July 14. The visitors were given a tour of the new building and the renovations that had already been made.

"No one's really uptight about it," Kooy, a member of First CRC and owner of a sales agency, says. "We're living in peace, which is a beautiful thing."

Guelph CRC has a new, very near, neighbour.

Members of Guelph Community Christian School and a local MPP watch principal Moore officially open their new building.

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Conversations *continued*

to educational issues and practices? If so, what language is needed? What language includes and not marginalizes others so as to engage in meaningful and authentic dialogue? The apostle Paul's stance of assuming the identity of those around him to build relationships and engage in meaningful dialogue could be a helpful principle: "And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law . . ." (Cor. 9:20). The breakdown of hierarchies ("we know") from a vertical position to a horizontal one ("we are learning") fosters meaningful, inclusive discussion.

As Margaret Heffernman says, "when we dare to break the silence, dare to see, when we create conflict we enable the people around us to do their very best thinking" ("Dare to Disagree"). To make her point, she cites an example of a man named Joe working in a technical device company, who becomes worried that the complexity of a device creates margins of error that could damage patients. No one else seems concerned so Joe remains silent. When Heffernan and Joe work together, they find a way to raise the concern among his colleagues. To his complete surprise, everybody else had the same questions and doubts. Now he had allies who can think together. Yes, there was lots of debate, argument, and disagreement, but that allowed everyone around the table to be creative, solve the problem, and change the device. Joe was a "whistleblower," but not a crank. He had been afraid of conflict, but finally he became more afraid of the silence, and when he dared to speak, he discovered much more inside himself and the system than he had ever imagined.

Joe's silence masked the most critical of issues. Are there those in the Christian school community who dare not speak up, create conflict, or ask the challenging questions because they are afraid to disrupt the *status quo*? Who has "whistleblower" courage? Who is prepared to be surprised that other Reformed Christians, perhaps many, share the same questions or similar doubts? Certainly, dwindling numbers tell a story that needs to be heard.

Education is at a crossroads and Christian education is no exception. Christian schools urgently need to address current realities, including the need for powerful learning and teaching that moves away from the "playing school" model. We must find a language to do the difficult work through critical discussions with an ever-expanding and inclusive educational community. This will be fundamental – as will the resulting changes in schools, teaching, and learning that reflect the fearless and daunting task of preparing generations of communities of learners to profoundly impact and change our world.

Mary Kooy began her career as a Christian school teacher. Since 1995, she has been a Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. She teaches in the Graduate Program. Her research interests focus on teacher learning and professional development.

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Editorials

In the desert: Prayer

Brian Bork

I have an aversion to praying in groups. That might not be the best confession for a member of the clergy to make, but like Martin Luther, here I stand: I can do no other. I especially dread "circle prayers," where we offer petitions as the prayer moves around the group. Usually I'm so caught up searching for the right petition that I find myself distracted, and even more often I find that someone else has already said what I planned to say by the time the prayer comes around to me. That leaves me with nothing to say, or sputtering out a welter of clichés and stock phrases that fall easily off my tongue.

I suppose that's the source of my frustration with praying in a group: it requires me to speak, and to elaborate, even if I'm not feeling up to it. I love words, but when it comes to prayer, it seems they so easily get in the way. Part of the problem is the clichés and the go-to phrases, but I'm also frustrated by the general sentiment that says the most earnest prayers are the ones that are the longest and most verbose.

I'm a bit reluctant to recruit the Desert Fathers and Mothers to give support to my own particular (and surely flawed) bias against prolix prayers. And I'm sure many of you feel the opposite way I do; maybe you're energized and comforted by the solidarity of praying in small groups.

Still, the wisdom that comes from the desert is full of caution about careless speech, and I think that serves us well in a culture where talk radio, 24-hour news channels and ceaseless chatter shape our prayers. These ancient monastics were very mindful of the way that words could be an obstacle in the way we relate to God, and the way we relate to others. Silence, both of the interior and exterior, was of vital importance to the life lived in the desert.

"There is no need to talk much in prayer," Abba Macarius said.

Need I say more?

They were most concerned with the ways we make poor use of our words. We use words to kill the silences which make us anxious. We use them because talking a lot is a way of taking control. And, perhaps most damagingly, we use them because when we're speaking, it means we don't have to listen. (We rarely ask questions when we pray, do we? Maybe that's because down deep we don't expect an answer).

Yet these monks and nuns were also mindful that St. Paul enjoined them to "pray without ceasing." In fact, if one were to sum up the goal of life in the desert, it would be just that: unceasing prayer.

Though it was the goal, it didn't mean these monastics rambled out tongue-parching extemporaneous prayers. In fact, they were encouraged to keep prayers simple and plain: Some monks asked Abba Macarius "How should we pray?" He said "There is no need to talk much in prayer . . . Say 'Lord have mercy on me.' If conflict troubles you, say, 'Lord, help me." A classic prayer of the Eastern Orthodox tradition also took shape at this time: "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

These were simple prayers prayed in the assurance that God knows what is best for his creatures, and knows all their petitions even before they take on grammar and sound. And their simplicity challenged the self-preoccupation and desire to be in control that afflicts so many wordy prayers. "Lord have mercy" beautifully confesses how we clutch at such meagre power, yet we are watched over by a merciful and loving God. Need we be any more specific? Need we say more?

In the desert, these short and simple prayers were prayed over and over and over again. They were mantras, repeated endlessly in the hope that they'd become something like breathing, always in the background, always happening, even if the pray-er wasn't always aware of it. The goal was to "tune" the heart, to find the frequency or the channel where one was truly open, where one could hear the Spirit praying within. Ceaseless prayer is not about speaking incessantly, but about unbroken listening, anticipation and the *expectation* to hear from God.

Could we cultivate a prayer life like this, despite our noisy culture? Maybe we could start simply, by developing a mantra. "Lord have mercy" is a good one. When anxiety strikes, when fear whips in, or when we find ourselves thinking ill of our neighbor: "Lord have mercy." "Lord have mercy." "Lord have mercy."

At the very least, we could become more mindful of the way our words can distract our neighbour from communion with God. "A desert monk was holding a feast and when his brothers came to eat they talked throughout the meal. He rebuked them, saying 'Be quiet, my brothers. There is one brother among you whose prayer is going up to God like a darting flame!'"

Brian Bork is the CRC Chaplain at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid LaurierUniversity.

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A Florida of the mind

Angela Reitsma Bick

I inherited my dad's dislike of dishwashers and the state of Florida. And I didn't realize this was unusual until friends said, offhandedly, "It must be a *disaster* for you, not having a dishwasher," and "You've never been to Disneyworld? Really?"

Well, doing dishes manually is not a disaster. On the other hand, there's nothing noble about it either. As for Florida, I've come to realize that the destination doesn't matter. My dad's main concern, I think, was to combat any sense of entitlement (*I'm young. I deserve a break*) to things like automatic dishwashers or annual trips down south.

My dad also sold RRSPs. He received glossy retirement brochures that featured hammocks and cruise ships – as if life after 65 is one long sea-side, sunset walk (probably in Florida). And here's another age group that can feel entitled: *I've worked hard. I deserve a break.* When Christians buy into that mentality – that retirement is the reward for a lifetime of filling RRSP storehouses – it's a tragedy, as these two (very different) ministers explain.

Made new every day

At 41, Rob Bell stepped down last year as pastor of the church he founded, Mars Hill Bible Church, after the controversy over his book *Love Wins*. He is now retired from preaching, following "a call to share God's love" in new ways in Los Angeles. Before leaving Mars Hill, however, he gave a sermon called *The Village Elder*. I caught it on podcast. In it, Bell describes a Biblical vision of ageing as one which directly contradicts cultural norms.

Our society convinces us that only new things matter, and then defines new as "young." But "new" in relation to time – in Greek, *neos* – only asks "how old is it?" "New" in terms of God's redemptive power – *kainos* in Greek – stands outside hours and days. In *kainos*, God is continually making all things new (II Cor. 4:16). Without that distinction in English, we accept the lie that everything old is irrelevant, Bell says. "When you get old, there is a place we send you: Florida," he jokes. But then, earnestly, "At the moment when you have the most time, wisdom and sometimes resources, we send you away to guarantee you won't have influence on future generations."

Once again, the destination doesn't really matter. You can remain in Canada all winter long, and still escape to what Bell calls a "Florida of the mind." This mindset says, *I'm outta here. I did my time. I once was young, but now I'm old.* And it weakens the community of believers. "You can't leave us," Bell concludes, "because we need what you have, now more than ever."

Bearing fruit in old age

At 66, John Piper has made public his plans to retire in June 2014 as Pastor of Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He feels strongly about how he will spend his "free" time after that. "Most of the suggestions that this world offers us for our retirement years," he says, "are bad ideas. They call us to live in a way that would make this world look like our treasure" (*Rethinking Retirement: Finishing Life for the Glory of Christ*). He vigorously calls Christians to resist buying into the idea of retirement as a substitute for heaven, but instead to spend time on Kingdom work, in love and in service to others. In his retirement, Piper says he wants to emulate the aging man in Psalm 71, who does not despair but takes refuge in the Lord, praises God continually and tells the next generation of God's "righteous acts and deeds of salvation."

Reaching for your hand

One thousand baby boomers retired in Canada today. And one thousand more will turn 65 each day for the next 18 years, as our largest generation moves from middle to old age.

My generation's crying out for you,
They're just looking for someone to look up to.

News

Farewell

Mendelt Hoekstra's long-running column, "My Window Seat," has ended. Hoekstra began writing for *Christian Courier* in 2004, when his oldest child was two. *CC* readers grew to know and love this sensitive, godly man and the glimpses he gave into family life from a father's perspective. Readers across Canada mourned with Mendelt when his beloved wife Marisa died in 2007; later, sadness turned to joy when the Hoekstra family expanded to include Shannon and her children. *CC* thanks Mendelt for his honesty and insight as a Christian writer observing the world from his window seat. May God continue to bless his family and work with the Momentum Choir.

Mendelt would like to thank the late Harry der Nederlanden for giving him the opportunity to share, all the other editors who have reminded him gently that his column was due and the many readers who took time to read his thoughts. May *CC* continue to remain vibrant and to bless others.

The Hoekstra family.

Read, engage, repeat

What's the value of *Christian Courier* today? Why bother reading it?

Because *CC* offers "news, clues and Kingdom views."

Our writers see the world in Biblical terms and try to give, as one reader put it, "some answers, some clues for how to respond to the overwhelming social, cultural and economic problems today."

As you can see from the gauge, new subscriptions have begun to trickle in. If you believe in the need for independent Christian journalism in Canada, help us make that trickle a flood. Read, engage, repeat . . . and join us in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

CC at the Day of Encouragement

Christian Courier was represented at the Day of Encouragement on Oct. 20, 2012, at Hamilton District Christian High School in Ancaster, Ont. Editor Angela Reitsma Bick and Features Editor Cathy Smith gave away sample copies of *CC* and chatted with attendees, receiving encouragement and constructive feedback about the paper and also gathering leads and contacts for future coverage.

The Day of Encouragement, sponsored by Diaconal Ministries Canada (CRC) and funded by registrations and church support, has been going strong for almost three decades. About 500 pastors, elders, deacons and lay leaders enjoyed the day, taking in a variety of workshops that pertain to Christian leadership and service opportunities. Asked about what changes she has seen over the years, Diaconal Developer Diane Plug notes, "The role of deacons is getting a higher profile. It's not just a training ground for elders any more. A synodical study committee is looking at the possibility of having deacon delegates at Synod."

Rev. Mark MacDonald, first aboriginal bishop in the Anglican Church of Canada and keynote speaker for the conference, also spoke strongly about the need for diaconal leadership: "Diaconal ministries is a biblical discipline to see the gospel zone. Wherever indigenous ministry has grown, it's when diaconal ministry is strong and vibrant." Rev. MacDonald noted that the proof of what we preach in the church has to be acted out beyond the church. "If we're going to change Canada, it's because of what we do, not just our preaching," he added.

Rev. MacDonald charmed his audience with his humour and congeniality. "How do you know God is doing something great?" he asked. "When Anglicans get excited." Plug noted that the organizing committee still has to read the evaluations that were received, but the consensus was that "It was a very positive day. Everyone felt good about how it went."

– Cathy Smith, Features Editor

Mike Hogeterp, Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue; Angela Reitsma Bick; Steve van de Hoef, Office of Social Justice.

New columnist on 'borders'

Christian Courier is pleased to welcome Brent van Staalduinen to our collection of monthly columnists. He has been contributing to *CC* for four years, including the short story "Finding December" (December 2009) and our series on pacifism (2012). He is also the author of *Finding December: Christmas Tales* (e-book) and *Make Fire in the Desert: 1427 days to unredecipher Kuwait* (2010).

Van Staalduinen spent six years in the Middle East and Asia teaching and writing and trying to make sense of the borders people create. His new column is called *Borderless;* its first installment can be found on page 14. He and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton and are expecting their first child. To contact or find out more about Brent and his writing, visit **brentvans.com.**

– Angela Reitsma Bick, Editor

Florida of the mind *continued*

Looking for someone to look up to, Michel sings.

I heard Canadian singer-songwriter Danny Michel, 42, belt out that song this past summer. His words strike a cultural chord. Seniors need the idealism, passion and energy of youth; and youth need to realize that others figured out all this hard stuff before, as Bell says. That connection will further the Kingdom of God.

And my generation's reaching for your hand.
Won't you open up your heart and mind to them?
It's not too late to find that spark
And maybe you could find it in your heart.

Because we need what you have, now more than ever.

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of Christian Courier. She appreciates the Christ-like love shining from her parents and in-laws – superheroes, all.

Christian Courier

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News

Pope begins 'Year of Faith' warning against passive, private faith

Marian Van Til, *with files from can/EWTN*

VATICAN CITY – The "Year of Faith" in the Roman Catholic Church began last month and Pope Benedict XVI wants to make it count for his worldwide flock. Benedict has initiated a year-long cycle of teachings "aimed at healing the division between what Christians say they profess, what they actually believe, and how they live their lives."

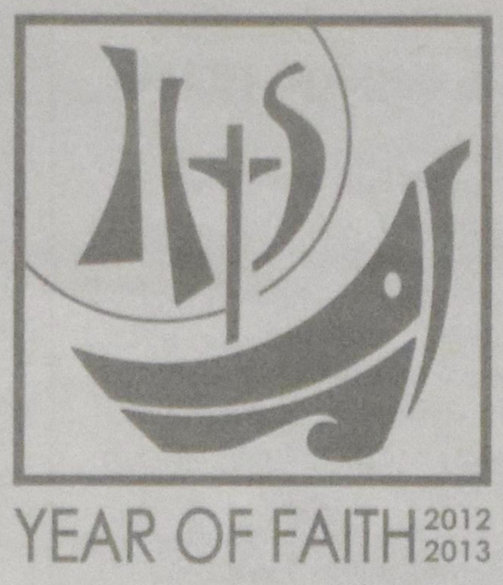
The Pope indicted his huge audience in St. Peter's Square on October 17 when he said that Catholics "often do not even know the core of their faith," which "leaves room for syncretism and religious relativism, without clarity on the truths to be believed and the salvific uniqueness of Christianity."

Benedict's message could apply to all Christians. Unless we understand our faith and live it fully, he warned, we leave ourselves prone to the forces operating in a "profoundly changed society" which is scarred by "many forms of barbarism." The Pope cited secularism, relativism, the use of other people as objects "for pure selfishness" and a "widespread nihilistic mentality." Those forces can exert a "crucial impact on the general mentality" of society. The result is that "life is often lived lightly, without clear ideals or sound hopes, in transient and provisional social and family ties."

Go deeper

The Pope had particular concern for young people. "Above all, the younger generations are not educated in the search for truth or the deeper meaning of existence that goes beyond the contingent, to a stability of affection, trust. If individualism and relativism seem to dominate the mind of many of our contemporaries, we cannot say that believers remain totally immune from these dangers...."

Benedict asserted the need for "sound instruction in the [confessions in the Nicene] Creed and the teachings of the church." If



that is absent, "the risk is not far off today of people building a so-called 'do-it-yourself' religion. Instead, we should return to God, the God of Jesus Christ. We must rediscover the message of the Gospel, to bring it into more deeply into our minds and our daily lives."

The Pope also called attention to results of a survey conducted by his bishops worldwide. The findings were to be used during the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization which lasted through almost all of October. Bishops reported these disturbing trends among their diocesan flocks: "A living faith that is passive and private; rejection of faith formation; and a rupture between faith and life."

Benedict wants Catholic teaching during"The Year of Faith" to get parishioners to understand that real and deep faith in Christ has "transformative power." He said, "With faith, everything changes in us and for us, and our future destiny is clearly revealed, the truth of our vocation in history, the meaning of life, the joy of being a pilgrim towards the heavenly Kingdom."

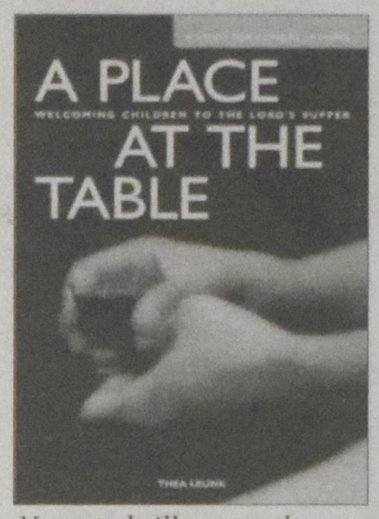
In his catechizing during this year, Pope Benedict said he will "offer some help in making this journey to take up once again and deepen the central truths of the faith of God, man, the church, of all the social and cosmic realities, meditating and reflecting on the statements of the Creed. And I would like to clarify that such content or truths of the faith are directly connected to our lives; they require conversion of existence, which gives life to a new way of believing in God."

CRC releases DVD to help welcome children to Communion

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan (CRCNA) – The decision of the 2011 synod of the Christian Reformed Church that opened the sacrament of Communion to baptized children marked a momentous change in the practice of the church. Under the new synod-approved Communion guidelines, the Table is open to children without requiring them to make a formal profession of faith ahead of time.

But implementing the inclusion of children requires study, discussion and thoughtful planning, say CRC leaders. As a result, Faith Alive Christian Resources, the CRC's publishing agency, and the CRC's Faith Formation Committee, have released a video-based (DVD) study on the subject. The study is called, "A Place At The Table: Welcoming Children To The Lord's Supper."

Though the issue has been talked about for some years, the Faith Formation Committee is the group that brought the issue to Synod 2011. Children-at-Communion came to the fore recently when it began to be clear that churches were developing a variety of approaches to the issue. The differences were due, in part, to requests by parents who believe their children are ready to participate in the Communion.



New study illustrates how to put Synod's children-at-communion option into practice.

The three-session DVD study is intended to help congregations engage in "the main biblical and theological questions surrounding the issue, and envision how you might put synod's proposed changes into practice," says the printed introduction to the study. "Your church can use this study in adult education classes, parent classes, inter-generational groups of adults and teens or for other interested people." The guide is also helpful for small-group use and personal reading and reflection.

Topics in the DVD include "Affirming Our Baptismal Identity," "Participating in the Lord's Supper" and "Professing Our Faith." Also included are Bible verses to study and personal stories about Communion from a range of people.

Nigeria: Archbishop calls for end to Muslim-Christian conflict

JOS, Niageria (Agenzia Fides) – The religion-sparked violence that has plagued Nigeria in recent months is offensive to both Christian and Islamic beliefs and must stop, the Catholic archbishop of Jos said in a recent nationwide radio address.

Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama of Jos asserted a "need to return to the true values of Christianity and Islam to create a Nigerian society that lives in peace and harmony." He was speaking at a forum on "Religious Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence" organized by the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).

Kaigama noted a few rare examples of solidarity between Christians and Muslims, referring to his personal experience. "I was recently invited by the Muslim youths in Jos to break the fast with many Muslims in the Jos Central Mosque, when some years ago I spent two nights in the house of the late Emir of Wase, Alhaji Haruna Abdulahi and trav-

Kaigama advocates for peace between Muslims and Christians, which he believes is possible despite the ongoing violence in his country.

eled to Germany with him for two weeks, telling our story of peace building efforts. That for me was a dialogue of life which I advocate for Muslims and Christians."

His address came after two recent deadly incidents. During an October 17 attack on a village in the central state of Benue, 30 people died. The attack was instigated by Fulani farmers, mostly Muslims, against a village inhabited by Tiv farmers, mostly Christians. Secondly, in Maidugiri there were violent clashes between the army and the Islamist group Boko Haram during which 24 people were killed.

Canadian high school teacher takes students to Ohio to campaign for Obama

OTTAWA (LifeSiteNews.com) – An Ottawa-area mom was "incensed" that a teacher at her daughter's Catholic school organized a trip to Ohio in the final days of the U.S. election to support the re-election of President Obama. She wasn't the only one. When news of the trip hit the "twitter universe," many Americans were equally incensed. Many angrily agreed with the "tweeted" sentiment that "foreigners shouldn't be trying to influence the outcome of our crucial election."

Fifty-two students from St. Peter's and St. Matthew's high made the trek across the border this week to Boardman, Ohio, accompanied by their civics teacher, Scott Searle. Ohio is almost always a key "swing state" in U.S. national elections.

Mardi de Kemp, a St. Peter's school board spokesperson, denied that the students were involved in supporting the Obama campaign. They were only there to "observe," voter registration and the voting process.

However, on his Facebook page Searle wrote, "Fifty-two St. Peter students are travelling to Ohio for the last week of the election Lets help the President bring it home!" He also shared a photo on his page of a sign that says: "We are re-electing the President so . . . volunteer, maybe?"

Searle listed himself as a volunteer with "Obama for America" on his LinkedIn profile for 2012.

One St. Peter's student who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that Mr. Searle came to her classroom to plug the trip. "He made it very clear that this was to promote Obama," she said, adding that Searle had a "pleasant banter" with her classroom teacher about how "Romney is a nutbar."

Searle told the students that they would be calling people and going door-to-door encouraging them to vote for Obama. The school would not further comment, saying Searle's volunteering was "really his personal business."

Scott Searle did not respond to an e-mail request seeking comment.

[This story went to press before election day in U.S.

News

Pakistan: Case against 16-year-old raises renewed questions re: blasphemy laws

KARACHI, Pakistan (WEA) – A 16-year-old Christian boy was arrested under Pakistan's blasphemy law on October 9 for allegedly sending anti-Islamic text messages. The following day an angry crowd ransacked the family home of Ryan Stanten, hauled the contents into the street and set the belongings on fire.

In protest that is itself seen as blasphemous, activists urge Pakistan to reform its severe blasphemy laws.

Reports say the 16-year-old boy was taken to see local prayer leaders in Karachi after the text message was sent. Police said Ryan told the religious leaders he had forwarded the message without reading it, sending it to other students in the middle-class compound where he lived – living quarters for employees of the local gas company where his mother was employed. Reportedly, she has since been dismissed from her job, though no reason was given.

A police official downplayed the arrest, saying that Ryan was charged only to calm the mob and to save the house from further damage. But Pakistan's blasphemy law has for some time been criticized for its severity and for being open to abuse. The law drew special attention last summer after a mentally disabled 14-year-old Christian girl was arrested in August for blasphemy. She was accused of burning a Koran. Following an outcry over that case, the girl, Rimsha Masih, was released on bail – an extremely rare move in blasphemy cases.

Blasphemy is a highly sensitive issue in Pakistan, where 97 percent of the population is Muslim, and where conversion away from Islam can have serious consequences. Critics say the law is also often used to settle personal vendettas: accusations of blasphemy have led to vigilante killings by mobs.

Rights activists have long urged Pakistan to reform the law, under which a person can be jailed for life or sentenced to death. The BBC reported that in March 2011, Minister for Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti was killed after calling for the repeal of the blasphemy law. His death came just two months after the murder of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, who also spoke out about the issue.

In reporting Ryan Stanten's case, the BBC noted that when Pakistan was partitioned in 1947 it inherited offenses relating to religion which were first codified by India's British rulers in 1860. In the 1980s clauses were added to the law by the military government of General Zia-ul Haq. One clause designates life imprisonment for "willful" desecration of the Koran. Another says blasphemy is punishable by death or life imprisonment.

Arizona: Doctors urge court to consider fetal pain in limiting abortion law

WASHINGTON D.C. (CNA) – A group of doctors has called on a U.S. appeals court to consider the ability of a fetus to feel pain when that court examines an Arizona law preventing abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

"Hormonal, behavioural and physiologic evidence supports the legislature's conclusion that a fetus at 20 weeks gestation feels pain," read the amicus brief, filed with the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The brief argued that the state has an established interest in eliminating or reducing "activities that provoke pain."

The brief was filed on Oct. 10 on behalf of Doctors on Fetal Pain, a physician and medical researcher association that seeks to raise awareness about evidence showing the ability of unborn children to experience pain.

The case, Isaacson v. Horne, challenges an Arizona law to ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy except in cases of medical emergency. In forming the law, state legislators took into account scientific and medical evidence indicating that unborn children can feel pain at this point in development. The law's opponents argue that fetal ability to feel pain "should not be legally relevant."

Arguing that unborn babies can feel pain may help determine legislation preventing mid-to late- term abortion in Arizona.

A district court ruled in favour of the legislation in July. Shortly afterwards, the appeals court temporarily blocked the law's implementation while it considered the case. The amicus brief urged the circuit court to affirm the lower court's ruling, which held that the law is a "constitutionally permissible regulation of abortion."

The evidence includes the biological development of a fetus. "By seven weeks gestational age, pain sensors develop in the face of the unborn child and, by 20 weeks, sensory receptors develop all over the child's body and the children have a full complement of pain receptors," said the doctors. In addition, the lower court had observed, "when provoked by painful stimuli, such as a needle, the child reacts, as measured by increases in the child's stress hormones, heart rate and blood pressure." These responses decreased when the child was given anesthesia, which doctors often do during fetal surgery. The district court thus concluded that the state had shown a legitimate interest in limiting abortions past 20 weeks.

Although courts have reached different opinions on the "existence and extent of fetal pain during abortion," they recognize that "fetal pain is legally relevant to the regulation of abortion," the brief noted. "The Court should affirm the decision of the district court that Arizona has a constitutionally recognizable interest in limiting the infliction of pain on the unborn."

Former NHL referee tells how God changed his heart

WASHINGTON D.C. (EWTN) – Legendary hockey referee Kerry Fraser had a trademark hairstyle and he holds the record for most National Hockey League games called. However, Fraser's life was most deeply touched by a different kind of call – one that led to his conversion.

"It was overwhelming and powerful," he said, explaining that God reached out to him through his wife, and "never stopped calling."

Last month Fraser talked about his conversion at the second annual Courage Awards reception, hosted by Catholic Athletes for Christ.

The record-holding referee explained that he grew up in a household without a strong faith. Starting what would become a 30-year career in the NHL, he worked hard to be in control of his life. "It was all about me," he said, and that created problems. "It was me that needed to be fixed. I was broken."

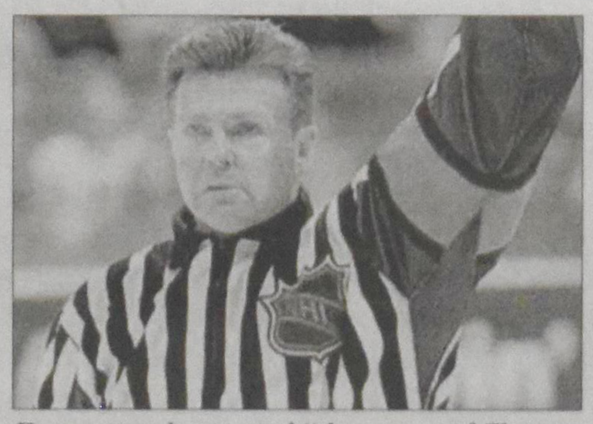
His wife, Kathy, meanwhile, was praying for a change of heart in her husband. "Through the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, I was led every step of the way," Kerry Fraser said.

In addition to the powerful witness of his wife and other people that God placed in his life, Fraser said that he experienced several "mystical events" that he attributes to God's love and mercy, including one instance while driving to Pittsburgh, during which he saw an image in the sun of a baby in its mother's womb and two joined hearts.

New relationships

He converted to Christianity and became a Catholic in 1995. As he began living his new faith and allowing the Lord to take control of his life, Fraser began to experience a profound peace. "My life changed. My heart changed." That change included his professional relationships. "I was carrying the armor of Christ with me onto the ice," he said.

Fraser told about how his faith influenced him in an encounter with player Theo Fleury, a talented but troubled star who was known for his aggressive style of play. In one 1996 game, Fleury showered Fraser with foul language and threw his helmet at him, calling for a fight.


Fraser says he carried "the armor of Christ onto the ice" after conversion.

Fraser said that his human reaction would have been to kick the helmet back in Fleury's face, but instead, he looked for "a better way," maintaining his temper and disciplining the player according to the rules of the game.

A few years later, during a break in a game, Fraser says Fleury came to him with tears in his eyes. A player on the opposing team, Tyson Nash, had been mocking Fleury about his drug and alcohol addictions, which he had been desperately working to treat, and he was overwhelmed.

While Fraser could have brushed him off or even ridiculed him, given Fleury's attack on him in 1996, he chose instead to look upon the hockey player with the eyes of Christ. "I saw a wounded human being there," he said, explaining that he convinced Nash to apologize for his remarks. Years later, he said, Nash confessed that the encounter had been a "life-altering situation" that prompted him to re-evaluate who he was and how he was acting on the ice.

"We never know what kind of effect we might have on people; how we can make a difference," Fraser observed.

Fraser told his audience, "Truly living out your faith will make a difference in the lives of those around us, even if we don't always see the result." Fraser encouraged student athletes to use their sports to glorify God, whether it is noticed or not. "Continue to stay in the light. Lead by example," he said. "Christ set the bar very high. But the reward is incredible."

Columns

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

Carefully, creatively chosen

I have three stories to tell you about the power of words.

Here's the first: when I was a kid, growing up in Oshawa in the 1970s, my neighbour was a boy named Mike Willoughby. Mike used to ride up and down his driveway on a little white, six-wheeled toy. Its official name was the "ATV Explorer 980 Ride-On Toy," but he called it the "Juuu-ger."

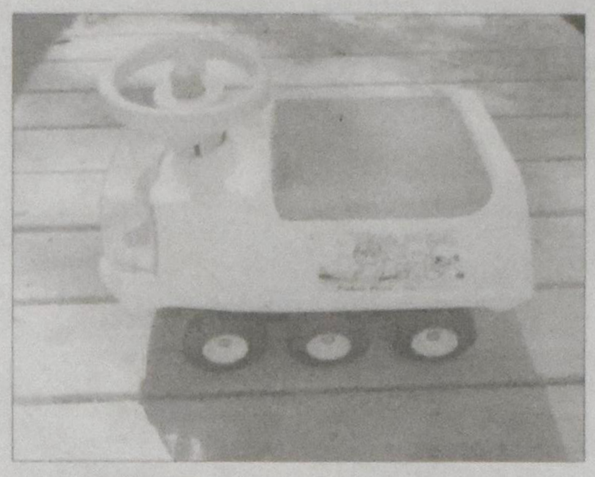
That's because, when you pulled the lever next to the steering wheel, it revved up, and made a low, mechanical noise that sounded like this: "Juuu-ger."

Here's the second: when I was in university, I met a girl who was an identical twin. She and her sister had grown up – as twins sometimes do – speaking their own language. At home, they referred to the vacuum cleaner as "the flinga-flunger." When they first started school, and the subject of vacuum cleaners somehow came up, their classmates made fun of their made-up word. The girls went home, crying.

And here's the third story: when my son was three years old, he had a wooden marble maze that he loved to play with. When he set up the courses, some of them would get up to two or three feet tall. He called them "marble highs." Then, one day, I made the mistake of calling them marble "towers." After that, they become towers, and nothing else. Which, as far as I was concerned, was too bad. Because if you don't give something a name, kids will often invent one that's better than the proper, dictionary-approved word. After all, what's more memorable? ATV Explorer 980 Ride-On Toy or Juu-ger? Vacuum cleaner or flinga-flunger? Towers or highs?

Kids are great at naming stuff. Before NASA launched its mechanical rover, they held a competition to give the "Mars Science Laboratory" a friendlier-sounding name. The winner was Clara Ma, a grade six student from Kansas who called the rover "Curiosity."

In her application to the contest, she wrote that "Curiosity is the passion that drives us through our everyday lives. We have become explorers and scientists with our need to ask questions and to wonder."



Popular 1970s toy: the Juuu-ger.

What drives us

Curiosity really does drive us. There is something in our human nature that makes us want to discover new things and name them. Children are particularly good at it, but it's an impulse that stays with us through adulthood.

All of us show creativity with naming. We name our cars, our boats and, ultimately, our children after people that are important to us, ideals that we have, words whose shape and sounds are pleasing to us.

Before my son was born, I joked with my dad that I was going to name the baby "!Xabbu!" One of the characters in a book I'd been reading was a South African Xhosa tribesman, and the "!" in the name is actually a clicking sound.

When my dad asked why that name, I replied: "Imagine the fun! When his teachers try to put !Xabbu! in alphabetical order, their brains will freeze!"

My dad, a teacher for 35 years, laughed long and hard about that one. That he was able to laugh about it was remarkable. At the time, my dad was suffering with a terrible and fatal form of senile dementia. He died the very night my son was born. By then, he had forgotten the names of almost everything and everyone, except those closest to him.

Months before, my wife and I had agreed on the name we would give our child if he was a boy. We'd call him "William" – after my dad, who loved wordplay, and Sandy's dad – a man with a great, big generous heart. It seemed like the perfect legacy.

And yet – when it came right down to it – we decided that, though our son's first name would be "William," it would be an honorary name only. We would call him by his second name, the weight of the first simply being too descriptive for either of us to bear.

Scripture affirms the power of names. Adam's first job, we are told in Genesis 2:20 was to "give names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field." Like everything in Genesis, that story is designed to tell us something about the nature and character of God, in whose image we are made.

That story illustrates, that, like God, we are creative beings. It's clear that, next to actually making a thing, calling it a "cow" or a "monkey wrench" or a "Pontiac Aztec" is the greatest creative power we have.

And that, too, should tell us that we need to choose our words with great care. Because just as words have the power to illustrate, amuse, delight and enlighten us, they also have to power to isolate, confuse, anger and divide us.

There's a big difference, after all, between calling someone a "single mother" and a "slut." A "homosexual" and a "fag." A "Pakistani" and a "Paki." One word describes and illuminates, the other judges and diminishes.

Through his word, God teaches us there are no such things as "just" words. There are only words that create or destroy. That build up, or tear down. He tells us they must always be carefully and creatively chosen.

And if we want pointers on how to do that, our kids can help us out.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

Principalities & Powers

David Koyzis

Disallowing debate, dictating dogma

Ontario's education minister appears to believe her government has the authority to decree an end to a debate that has been going on for at least four decades in North America. She is also claiming a right to tell Roman Catholic schools what they can and cannot promote as Catholic teaching. And all this on the pretext of putting an end to bullying.

Last month Laurel Broten convened a news conference at Queen's Park, Toronto, to express her displeasure at three Progressive Conservative MPPs arguing against taxpayer support for abortion earlier that day. Citing Bill-13, the province's controversial anti-bullying law, Broten castigated them for reopening an issue that should remain closed. "I think it is critically important for Ontario women to understand that our government, our Premier, Premier McGuinty, that we support a woman's right to choose. That debate is over, it has ended and it should stay that way."

Furthermore, Broten argued that Catholic schools should not be advancing the pro-life cause, because it violates this hallowed right to choose. "[W]e do not allow and we're very clear with the passage of Bill 13 that Catholic teachings cannot be taught in our schools that violates [sic] human rights.... Bill 13 is about tackling misogyny, taking away a woman's right to choose could arguably be one of the most misogynistic actions that one could take."

Three observations are in order.

First, name-calling is in effect an act of desperation and a tacit admission that one's own arguments have been insufficient to carry the day. If you cannot through reasoned deliberation persuade your opponents of the rightness of your cause, then it is tempting to force an end to the discussion if you have the power to do so. If that means labelling your opponents misogynists, so be it. Broten may indeed think the debate ended long ago, but there are plenty of people in Ontario and elsewhere who would dispute her interpretation. Campaign Life Coalition and ProWomanProLife come to mind here. Broten's pronouncement is wishful thinking at best.

Second, a government official lacks the normative competence to decide what a church's teachings should be. Canada does not have an established church under government jurisdiction. A political office-holder obviously exceeds the mandate of her office when she dares to decide what a church is and is not allowed to teach as doctrine. Only ecclesiastical office-bearers have this right, which they exercise according to their own understanding of divine revelation. To run such teachings past the political authorities is not a requirement here in Canada. China may try legally to prevent Buddhist monks from reincarnating without government permission, but that's not how we do things in this country. Broten should read the Charter of Rights and Freedoms if she is unclear on this point.

Third and finally, Broten's understanding of what constitutes a person's identity is faulty in the extreme. Broten implicitly defines our identity as a mere assertion of autonomy, that is, of the right to choose apart from any "thick" conception of the human person dependent on norms not of our own making. If a woman wishes to harm her own body or the foetal life growing within her, it is her decision to make, whatever its impact on herself, her loved ones and the larger social fabric.

In reality, of course, human beings are far from autonomous, and the validity of their decisions can never be vindicated by a mere right to choose. After all, even Broten could hardly argue that a woman has the right to sell herself into slavery, even though its legal prohibition appears to constrain her freedom of choice.

Our world belongs to God, and we are not our own. We always answer to Another, who has called us to live for his honour and glory. Everything we do depends on the norms by which he upholds his creation. Such norms prohibit governments from overreaching their authority by interfering in areas outside their proper jurisdiction. Perhaps we need an anti-bullying law to prevent ministers of education from bullying faith-based schools and others who dare to dissent from their desire to dictate dogma.

David T. Koyzis (dkoyzis@redeemer.ca) is in his 26th year of teaching politics at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ont. He is currently seeking a publisher for his book on authority, office and the image of God.

Reviews

A book of uncommon prayer

Curt Gesch

If you don't know Anthony Torrone of Grand Rapids, Michigan, you may consider yourself deprived.

When you are in Grand Rapids you could find Anthony at Frank's Market or The Bitter End, a coffee shop where people read books, discuss philosophy and buy weird coffee. You could also meet Anthony at Servant's Community Church (affiliated with the RCA) on the city's West Side.

Or, if you can't get to Grand Rapids, you can meet Anthony through his first published book. That's how I met him.

Anthony's book – *Anthony's Prayers: Thank You God for Everlasting* – contains many photographs and many prayers. As you can figure from the title, Anthony specializes in thanksgiving. If he were so inclined, you could excuse Anthony for being negative about life. Anthony is developmentally disabled, and has been a resident of an institution where he was abused by staff: "a nurse told me to shut my mouth didn't like my prayers." Anthony was also hit in the mouth with a baseball bat. Later Anthony was reunited with his mother in Grand Rapids where they lived together until her death.

Through all these experiences Anthony has been graced with a thankful heart. Instead of dwelling on illness, Anthony celebrates health: "*I want to thank you for letting me live right / live normal / live healthy without convulsions/ also without seizures / and I havn't had any of it happen to me since sun Oct 27 74 1030 p.m.*"

Instead of helplessness, Anthony celebrates his independence: "*Thank you for letting me do my own shopping / and I want to thank you for helping me take my medicine on my own / without being told.*"

Instead of ostracism and persecution, Anthony experiences acceptance: "*I don't want to be teased again / all I want to do is live like a good growing up man / I also want to thank you that nobody hasn't picked on me / in a long time*"

Anthony is a creative spirit, shown by his elaborate Lego sculptures like a huge giraffe and a stern-wheeler. His creativity is enlightened by spiritual sensitivity: he made a Lego headstone for his mother and liturgical signs that read: "*CHRIST HAS DIED; CHRIST HAS RISEN; CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN; EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS.*"

You should buy this book for yourself, plus a few copies for your family, friends, acquaintances, church and Christian school library. Those who don't have the privilege of already knowing God may meet him through Anthony Torrone, who wishes to *"make people understand God is a safe father."*

Curt Gesch (cgesch63@gmail.com) is an advocate for persons with disabilities in his congregation, region, and as part of the international CRC/RCA Disabilities Concerns organisation. He encountered Anthony's Prayers *during a convention and read it instead of listening to the featured speaker.*

Anthony's Prayers
by Anthony Torrone
is available from Freeze Frame Publishing. (laura@freezeframepublishing.com or 616-897-5398). Anthony's writing can also be found at **anthonysprayers.blogspot.com.**

Gordon-Levitt stars in time-travel thriller

If you knew the future, would it change how you live now?

Brett Alan Dewing

The halls of geekdom are abuzz, resounding with hyperbolic promises of "a once in a generation sci-fi masterpiece" called *Looper*. Some have gone as far as to label it the best sic-fi movie of all time. With all that clamor, it's hard not to be skeptical, but it was with great hope that I went to see the film.

Looper takes place in Kansas, 2044. The first third of the film concerns itself with setting the ground rules of the sic-fi. In the 2070s, time travel will be invented – and outlawed. Mob bosses will also face a great difficulty disposing of bodies, and they will solve this problem by sending marks back in time to be instantly killed by "loopers." When the looper's contract expires, he will himself be sent back in time to be killed by his younger self. This plot, however, is basically set-up for a wider, more intricate plot that fills up the other two thirds of the film. Unfortunately, talking about that plot would constitute spoilers, and I've already explained enough.

The film concerns Joe, played in 2044 by Joseph Gordon-Levitt and 30 years later by Bruce Willis. Their chase is only part of the story, the rest concerning a farmer played by Emily Blunt. The two male leads do their signature things, but it is Blunt who outdoes herself, putting in a truly transformative performance. She is a master of American accents and alters her entire physical bearing in a way that reminds me of Renee Zellweger's Oscar-winning turn in *Cold Mountain*.

Prosthetics and make-up are used to transform Gordon-Levitt into a closer ringer for Willis, and at times it is distracting looking at a face that is at once familiar and strange. This can be an effective distancing, however, as that is exactly how the younger Joe would see the older.

Speaking of the presence of the younger and older Joe in the same time, the film is smart in dealing with the mind-paralyzing twists of time travel. It doesn't strain to explain things too much or enter the labyrinth of "if that, then this" that leaves many time travel tales implausible or simply hard work to watch. It uses what is helpful for the story and commonsense to the characters and eschews any further pondering.

The themes of the film are classic time travel fugues, however: responsibility, consequence and fate. If you knew the future, how would it change the way you lived your present? And some of the answers here are unique, I admit, but the central plot device is anything but novel.

But, the question is looming, how does the film stack up? Is it indeed the best sic-fi story of our generation? If I were into letter grades, I'd be tempted to give it a B, maybe a slight B+. The movie is violent and bloody, but also glum and pensive. It unfolds in a suitably atmospheric and mildly surprising way. The end is potentially unsatisfying for those wanting a happier bow and the knowledge of what happens next. But in the end, I didn't find that any of the violence or the thoughtfulness enlightened anything new, anything beautiful. Was it better than most Hollywood sic-fi? Likely. But the best of all time? Nope. Not for me.

Looper
directed by Rian Johnson
Tristar Pictures, 2012

Brett Alan Dewing (brettalandewing@gmail.com) is a poet, playwright, and critic living in Warren Center, Penn. His work has been published in Windhover, hammered Out, Christian Courier, *and* *catapult.

Features

Military chaplaincy – a ministry of presence

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Rev. Gerald Van Smeerdyk is an ordained minister of the Christian Reformed Church who has served in the Emo CRC (1995-2001) and the Dunnville CRC (2001-2008). On Feb. 11, 2008, he was commissioned as an officer in the Canadian Forces (CF), and moved to Ottawa where he began serving as a military chaplain. In the summer of 2010, he moved yet again to his current posting in Edmonton, Alberta.

How did God lead you to your present role as a military chaplain?

As a civilian minister, I had always encouraged the church to take responsibility for the community it lived in. The Emo CRC participated in the foundation and development of the Door of Hope, a Christian counselling centre. The Dunnville CRC advocated for women with crisis pregnancies. While there, I represented our congregation as chair of the Joint Chaplains committee which provided on-call chaplains from the local ministerial to the local hospitals and retirement homes. We also endeavoured to influence our local member of parliament concerning policies that affected religious freedom and the rights of unborn children.

Working so closely with my congregations in community service, I observed that the church has a large amount of wealth compared to the communities we live in. We have no shortage of faith, hope and love to face our struggles while many others outside of church communities struggle alone. Fortunately, the churches that I served had a deep love of sharing the resources God had given them.

Nearing the end of my service to the Dunnville CRC, my desire to bring faith, hope, and love where it was needed most drew my attention more and more to the struggles faced by the members of the Canadian Forces who were serving in Afghanistan. I discovered that the CF had a great need for chaplains and were eager to receive my application. The application process culminated with a three-month Chaplain Basic Officer Training Course in Borden, Ont. It was there that I learned a new thing: the CF puts an impossible demand upon individuals. In order to accomplish any mission efficiently, effectively, and safely, the basic military unit is a team.

Can you share something of your experience in Ottawa?

I served there as military chaplain to the Military Police Headquarters and the Ottawa Military Chapel as lead pastor. Twice, I was sent to the far north to provide chaplaincy support to the troops in our most remote station. The only way to get there involves many hours of travel within the belly of a Hercules aircraft, a craft designed for transporting cargo rather than providing comfort for human passengers. The noise is deafening and the discomfort is appalling, but the gratitude of the troops in the far north showered upon visiting chaplains more than makes up for the trouble of getting there. Stationed there for six month rotations, the troops long for anything that reminds them of home and the loved ones they have left behind. The disconnection between military members and their civilian families can be the most difficult part of their service. Military chaplains have their feet in both worlds and function as an important link between deployed members and their families.

The first time I travelled there in 2008 to celebrate Christmas, I discovered to my delight that chaplains can do just about anything. As commissioned officers, we have rank and authority, while as chaplains we stand outside the chain of command and have virtually unrestricted access and availability. Needing a large enough space to hold a chapel service on Christmas Day, I closed the bar and offered something other than beer and pretzels – the body and blood of our Lord. Talk about redeeming creation!

After leaving Ottawa, you went to Edmonton. What was the nature of your work there?

When I first arrived in Edmonton, I was assigned to the Lord Strathcona Horse (Royal Canadian) Battalion. This is an armoured regiment (tanks and light armoured vehicles). Its troops have been in constant rotation to Afghanistan from 2006 until the time we brought all the combat troops home in 2011. To maintain combat readiness, this battalion also goes out on exercise for weeks at a time, placing a large burden upon every member and their families. You cannot imagine the privilege it feels to bring the ministry of presence to our members under these circumstances.

A year later, I was deploying with the troops to Afghanistan. Halfway around the world, separated from their families and country, performing the incredible task of removing all our material and equipment in extremely hot weather in a war zone, our troops had their hands full. Under these darkened conditions, the light of God's presence through the chaplain glows brightly. Compassion, kindness, an encouraging word, chapel services, providing advice on the welfare of the troops and their families to the Commanding Officer, providing pastoral care to the troops, referring troops to other care-giving professionals like doctors, nurses and social workers – these things improve the difficult life of a soldier.

What's your role in the military now?

Today, I am serving the Joint Personnel Support Unit (JPSU) as Regional Chaplain for Alberta and Northern Canada. I provide chaplaincy support to the Integrated Personnel Support Centre (IPSC) Edmonton, and oversee chaplaincy support for IPSC Calgary, Wainwright, Cold Lake and Yellowknife.

As the Regional Chaplain, I support the work of the Regional Commander and his staff to provide the best possible care to our ill and injured members in Alberta and Northern Canada. When they cannot continue serving in the military, we help them transition back to the civilian world with job training and placement. Otherwise, we help them return to work in their original unit, or transfer to another trade. Our mission is to help all our members get better. To do so we engage every means of help available including medical, psycho-social and spiritual. As chaplain, I have the privilege of introducing or re-introducing our members to the eternal values that God has placed in all our hearts.

What aspects of your job are particularly challenging? What's rewarding?

Being present is 99 percent of the job. We call it "walking the line." We also call it "the ministry of presence." We go wherever the soldiers go. We are wherever the soldiers are. They see us on a daily basis, and, when they get in trouble, they may see us any time of the day or night. We are faithful and loyal. We care. We don't harvest much, but we plant a lot of seed. We win over the hearts and minds of our members so that they can draw closer and recognize that all this goodness has come to them from God. And that's when we see faith, hope and love bring healing and strength to those who need it.

The aspect of my work that I find particularly challenging is working with members who avoid chaplains because they want nothing to do with religion. At the same time, this can be the most rewarding work of all. There was a member who often ended the work day by telling me, "Hey, padre [the CF term for chaplain], you must be slipping. You still haven't saved my soul!" Then he would chuckle and walk away. He didn't take me seriously and that made it very difficult for me to help him with some of his troubles. One day, his wife was to return from her tour to Afghanistan. I knew he was quite worried about her because she had had a hard time of it. So, without telling him, I arranged to be there when her flight arrived. I was there when she came out of the gate and they embraced. He turned around and saw me standing there. I was there to shake her hand, to thank her for her service, and to welcome her home. That day I finally became his padre, too.

Any closing thoughts?

I know that the churches would help the members of the CF if they could. The need is there. But the members of our forces, because of their schedules, high operating tempos, deployments and constant movement to different locations are often outside of a church's normal reach. That's why the CF are glad to receive your assistance through military chaplains.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf55@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.

NOV. 18
CHAPLAIN SUNDAY

The Chaplain

PRAYER FOR CHAPLAINS

Father, we all have a calling and we all need your grace in special and particular ways, but today we pray especially for Chaplains. We thank you for their willingness to be with the vulnerable, the isolated, the institutionalized, the "at risk" and the dying. May you continue to raise up men and women who are willing to leave the confines of the established church, or developing church, to be the church to the un-churched. May your light continue to shine in the dark places of our society through the presence of Chaplains. And may those who serve in such capacities receive a rich reward through the response of those to whom they minister, as well as through the crown that you have promised in eternity. In the name of your Son, who also went into the highways and byways of life to touch the lost, AMEN.

*Shared with permission from the **crcna.org** website.*

Features

War children

Cathy Smith

My husband Mark and I are war children, although not in the traditional sense.

My mom was a teenager during WWII in Ten Post, Groningen. It was a tense adolescence. Familiar faces went missing. Her dad was forced to work for the Germans in Delfzijl, biking the 14 km distance twice daily. Details are sketchy, but he helped the Dutch Underground while he was there to get false documents stamped.

It was a time of deprivation. School was cancelled. There was no wood for the stove. There were no teachers. Mom did not go hungry as so many others did, but a boiled egg was a mouth-watering treat reserved for Christmas. She has vivid recollections of rationing. She would be sent by her mother to stand in line on behalf of elderly neighbours with coupons for a bit of pork or a packet of sugar.

Mom experienced fear. At night she heard the drone of Allied planes heading to Germany, an incessant apprehension. Once a damaged plane did, in fact, drop its load about a kilometre away. Everything fell off the shelves, the children flying downstairs. In the morning they went out to survey five giant holes in the ground. Decades later at a fireworks display on Canada Day, Mom was still unnerved by the whistling rockets and popping blasts, the colourful explosions inevitably triggering her past.

Mom also knew real terror. A number of German soldiers were staying in a house just a few doors down. Near the end of the war, as the Canadians approached, Mom's family was warned (it's never been clear to her by whom) to run away into the fields. They heard gunfire behind them as they fled. German soldiers ran with them, seeking to shield themselves, a melee of confusion and panic. Mark and I have walked those fields with her, where she ran for her life, her emotion palpable as she recounted the event. Her gratitude toward the liberating Canadians can't be conveyed in ordinary terms. It needs big words … undying, fervent, seminal.

Mark's dad, Bill Smith, now deceased, was among the Canadian Armed Forces who liberated Holland. He came from a Nova Scotia family with a long record of military service. His uncle Thomas was a stretcher bearer at Passchendaele. He died heroically, assisting an injured soldier in a trench, one of three Canadians struck by the same whiz-bang. Mark and I visited his grave at La Targette Cemetery in France, the first to do so in the Smith family. The three soldiers lie buried beside one another, a trinity of ultimate sacrifice, each headstone dated October 15, 1917. Bill's father served in England with the Canadian Forestry Corps in WWI and as a guard at a POW camp in Quebec during WWII. Bill's older brother Arthur enlisted, and, soon after, so did 17 year old Bill, lying about his age. He never said goodbye to his family so they couldn't prevent him from going. His mother was livid.

Bill was assigned to the Algonquin Regiment. Because of his youth, the older guys tried to watch out for him, especially the scout, who treated him like a son. Later in life, like so many other veterans, Bill didn't talk much about the war, but two stories stand out, a funny one and a sad one.

Soldiers were not allowed to fraternize with civilians, but Bill and a buddy met two girls and couldn't resist chatting them up over coffee. Their sergeant angrily meted out a harsh punishment. The boys were ordered to go out that night and put together a cut telephone line. This was a dangerous task. The Germans cut the lines specifically to pick off whoever was sent to fix them. Bill and his friend weren't given tools or instructions. Upon reaching their objective, flummoxed, they simply tied the two ends in a knot. It wasn't fixed, but it was put together!

The sad story is that one night the scout disappeared. When the regiment pulled out the next day, they found him lying dead in a ditch. They never discovered what had happened. When Bill told us that story, he shook his head silently, sorrow ghosting over his face.

We will remember them

I've stood proudly next to Bill at the cenotaph on November 11, an old man with impeccable posture and medals pinned to his Legion jacket – the France and Germany Star, Volunteer Medal, NATO Medal and Canadian Decoration Medal. When he died, his Legion friends came and paid their respects with solemn dignity, filing past his casket, each placing a poppy inside.

Mark and I have visited Wierden and viewed the plaque at City Hall honouring the Algonquin Regiment for liberating the city. Even the big words aren't enough to retrieve all the history trailing behind us and stretched between us, but the legacy is embodied in our very being. And so, we remember.

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is features editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ont.

The far side of 'enemy' lines

Angela Reitsma Bick

Ludwig Lehn was 14 years old when Germany invaded Poland and began the Second World War. He lived in a small farming community in eastern Germany. Wounded in World War I, his father was exempt from fighting, but Ludwig's older brothers – all five of them – were drafted into service for Hitler. Two brothers fought Russians on the Eastern Front; one disabled brother was stationed in Germany in a supply depot; and two were in Rommel's division in North Africa. In 1944, as soon as Lehn turned 18, he was sent to fight in France. He was on the beaches of Normandy when the Allies landed – the beginning of the end for Hitler. Lehn was captured and spent two years in a prisoner of war camp in France. He almost starved to death before being released back to Germany. Two of his brothers died during the war, one was wounded and two were sent to England, then America, also as POWs. *Christian Courier* interviewed Lehn about his memories as a German during World War II, and found out how long the memory of an Empire can last. Lehn, 86, now lives in Ontario.

Was anyone in your family conflicted about doing their duty for Germany?

Even though I was in the army, I didn't agree with what we were doing. We had to fight; in Germany it was the law. You had to defend your country.

How did your parents feel, having six sons in the army?

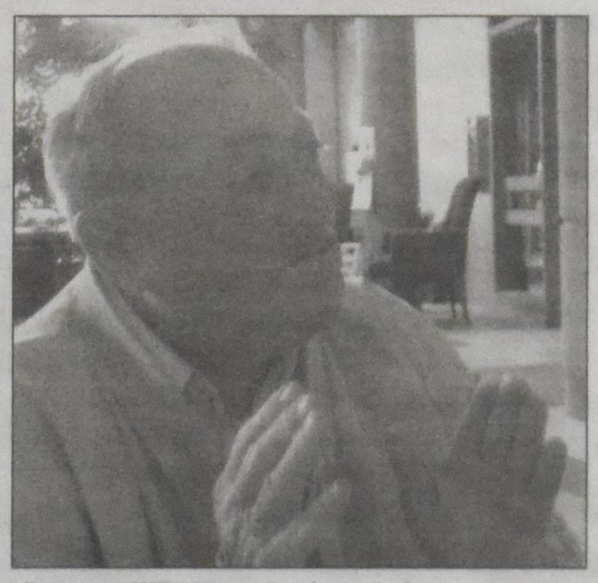
My mother was crying every day when the mailman came by bicycle. My father tried to keep me out of the war, but he was told [in 1944], "Mr. Lehn, we are losing the war. You will lose your farm; that's why we need your sons."

Tell me about your town.

It was a farming community. Our farm was dairy and sugar beets, everything. Sugar cane was not available during the war, so we were told to grow sugar beets. Every village had a small sugar refinery. We also had orders to keep beehives because the honey gave us protein. Government men came to teach us about taking care of the bees.

Did you know at the time of Hitler's plans for the Jewish population?

The German people had little knowledge of what was happening. When I was young, I was not knowing. Jews lived in the big cities, not our village. We knew they were being taken to labour camps, but a different group of soldiers took care of them there.



German WW II vet Ludwig Lehn.

How does someone like Hitler become so powerful?

Germany was very successful during Hitler's time, that's what Germans liked. Everybody had a job and social insurance. Every baby was insured from birth – from his toes to his head. Before that, a farmer might need to sell his horse to pay the doctor. Now farmers were not going bankrupt anymore.

What did the priest at your local church say about the war?

Catholic priests were not saying anything. They were told, by the German government and by the Pope, to stay away from politics. I remember the Pope blessing German airplanes as they flew overhead, sprinkling holy water into the air.

What do the history books leave out about World War II?

Many people wonder why Germans seemed so much behind Hitler. But he was very successful at white supremacy and encouraging holistic food and medicine. He organized things so good. Young nurses taught families how to care for their children; schools had one hour of outdoor exercise a day and cafeterias served healthy food. Anybody disabled was evaluated by three doctors, and if they decided that the person would have no good quality of life, and would burden the state, he was given pills in his soup. He falls asleep and then dies. Because of that, the rest were very healthy.

What one thing should my generation know about the war?

Never start another war, and don't spread hatred.

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of CC. Her grandparents lived in the Netherlands under Nazi occupation. They were involved in the Dutch underground.

Features

Looking to the past for the way forward

Mary Ann Benjamins

Rosemary Sloot, born two months after her mother's feet touched the shores of Canada, chronicles the Dutch post-war exodus in startlingly detailed paintings. Her pieces capture the anxiety of separation and loss and the incredible struggle to create a home within that void.

Rosemary began this particular painting odyssey as an act of grieving after finding herself both orphaned and widowed in a short span of time, To compound her sorrow, her mother's deathbed testimony was that her only regret in life was immigrating to Canada, leaving Rosemary feeling like Ruth – a stranger in a strange land: "That came as a total shock to me. It was as though a bomb had been dropped in my lap." She suddenly felt adrift.

To assuage her grief, Rosemary planned an exhibition of floral paintings for her loved ones. While painting her mother's favourite flower, Rosemary superimposed a carefree snapshot of her mother as a young woman on a holiday into the centre of the freesia. This initial painting became the catalyst for an entirely different art journey. The painting intrigued her, but compounded her feelings of abandonment: "I wondered where that feeling came from and at that point realized I couldn't let my mother's comments go. I decided to see where this would take me." Rosemary devoured countless books on the Dutch migration, stories of hope and exile, recovery and loss, to the point where her own family found her obsession with the past unhealthy and begged her to stop. She pressed forward anyway. The result was a seven year pilgrimage into the heart of the immigrant story.

Indian tea tin, *2008, oil on handmade paper, (left).* Halfweg, Holland, September 18, 1940, *2006, oil on canvas (right).*

Final Farewell 1952, *2007, oil on canvas.* PHOTOS BY WILLIAM KURYLUK

New life birthed from a *kist*

On a bright day in May I viewed Rosemary's exhibition at the Burlington Art Gallery. The exhibit was smaller than I expected; the room swathed in shadows and silence. There were paintings scattered on all the walls and a large pine shipping crate sat in the centre of the room like a pale ghost of the past. This garden shed-sized crate was the *kist*, crammed with the worldly possessions the immigrants thought they'd need to spark their beginnings on foreign shores. Bold letters on the crate declared the final destinations – Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, immigrants scattered like seeds on the wind into the fertile soil that was Canada, each family using the *kist* to sprout new life.

The paintings immediately took hold of something deep inside me. Faded letters overlaid on photos, softened and washed in the greys and browns of time. Delft blue tea towels, mottled grey pots, hats set on a jaunty angle, a wrinkled fat *oma* and a tall thin *opa* waiting for a pipe between his lips – these could be my grandparents, my tea towels, my pots. It was like looking at my own family photo album. My daughter Jantina said, "The paintings feel like a quiet visit with my grandparents. Comfortable. Beautiful. Strong." The gallery attendant, transplanted from Montreal, joined us and remarked on the visceral impact of exodus and exile.

Later, at her condo in London, slight and soft-spoken, Rosemary welcomed me graciously. Her walls were covered in art – the space at once striking and calm, not unlike Rosemary herself. Speaking of her mother, Rosemary's voice remained soft though her brown eyes grew wide and earnest, "She never complained . . . she was very practical." While Rosemary enjoyed art in high school, her sensible mother insisted she take some business courses. When Rosemary revealed her intention to focus on art in university, her mother was quick to point out that her older sisters had more talent. I smiled at this, but to my surprise Rosemary signaled her agreement with her mother's conclusion: "I know the amount of talent is modest." In fact, don't look for Rosemary's signature on any of the art that lines her walls; it's not there. But just as a writer is made by persistently picking up a pen, seven years ago Rosemary walked into her studio and picked up her brush. "As long as my mother was alive, the story was ongoing, but once she was gone, I wanted to know how we got here."

On a short tour of her studio, Rosemary described her development as an artist. Her earlier paintings have a photographic quality that makes your fingers itch to touch the smooth surface. She began by employing a similar technique for her *Immigrant* exhibition, but then, with nothing to lose and everything to gain, she ventured into new territory and tried different approaches: "I thought, 'If I fall, God will catch me.'" She set her creative process free. "Each painting was an experiment; I was flying by the seat of my pants, putting myself right out there." At one point she began adding text to the paintings and thoroughly enjoyed it. Painstakingly copying her grandmother's letters, Rosemary felt the deep love of a woman who had never held her in her arms. She gazed past me, her eyes narrowed, trying to describe the emotional connection that these paintings have given her to her past. What started out as an act of grief had transformed itself into a gift of love and faith.

Church as cultural receptacle

Rosemary's words created space for the question that had been stuck in my throat. In the gallery I had noted a curious absence of church and faith. Though, like me, Rosemary is a child of Dutch immigrants with an assortment of Indonesian treasures and a past etched in the sepia tones of precious photographs, this is where our histories diverge. The Sloot family, with roots of deep faith, were devout Catholics. They did not experience the same strong integration of church, home and school that marked my Reformed tradition. Immigrants like my parents, surrounded by like-minded families, aided by pastors and previously established churches, were quick to place their own brand on their new country with their own churches and schools rising on the landscape. As only one of a handful of Catholic immigrants to their area, Rosemary's family joined the local parish. For a few moments each Sunday they spoke the timeless words of the Latin mass, connecting them to family and faith around the world, but the local parish did not fill the profound cultural void that results from leaving home and country behind. The dark waters between Canada and The Netherlands, as superimposed over Rosemary's painting *Halfweg Holland*, left them feeling isolated in their adopted homeland. These feelings dominate the landscape of her art.

By painstakingly recounting the story of her mother's pilgrimage, Rosemary has particularized the history of a whole generation of people who are often overlooked. Their story needs to be told. On this voyage into her past Rosemary was determined to find peace for her mother's memory, peace for her siblings and peace for herself. And in the cool comfort of her living room, she is very sure that she has discovered that peace.

From the moment her mother first made that deathbed declaration, Rosemary set out to prove her wrong. Now she recognizes that her mother was entitled to her feelings at the end of her life, but that those feelings do not bind her as a daughter: "Her experience is not my experience." Emigration leaves scars; there will always be people caught in the middle. Many immigrants were wildly optimistic – later on most would agree that shadow and joy intermingled. Overwhelmingly, as Rosemary discovered, the Dutch exodus benefited the next generation most of all. "They did it for us – those born here. We are the beneficiaries." A seven year pilgrimage has brought Rosemary Sloot full-circle, finally at peace with her past, her feet firmly planted in Canada, her home and native land.

Mary Ann Benjamins is a supply teacher, writer and awards manager for the The Word Guild. *She blogs at* ***maryannbenjamins.wordpress.com****. Her cancer survival story can be found in* A Second Cup of Hot Apple Cider: Words to Stimulate the Mind and Delight the Spirit.

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

Burlington Art Centre,
Burlington, Ontario
April 21 - June 4, 2012

Thunder Bay Art Gallery,
Thunder Bay Ontario
September 14 - October 28, 2012

Norfolk Arts Centre,
Simcoe, Ontario
Spring, 2013

The King's University College,
Edmonton, Alberta
November 2012 - February 2013

MacLarenArtCentre,
Barrie, Ontario
June 8 - September 1, 2013

Columns

"Over the years I've walked down this road thousands of times," Heidi says, "with one dog or another. And sometimes I'm still amazed at the beauty I see."

Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke

The joy of ordinary

Over coffee the other morning Jack told me a people-watching story.

He had been sitting in a Tim Horton's when an energetic young Asian couple arrived. They stood, hand in hand at the till, scarcely taking their eyes off each other. At the table they exchanged broad smiles and excited chatter.

"I remembered what it was like when we first met, the thrill of getting to know each other," said Jack.

Then an elderly couple came through the door. The man stood tall and ramrod straight, walking gingerly, as if sudden movement might cause severe pain. His dear wife shuffled alongside him, stooped forward from the waist. She seated her husband, then tottered to the counter and placed their order.

He smiled as she returned with a tray. She plunked down in the chair across from him and proceeded to cut his Danish into bite-sized pieces. Before doing the same with her own, she slid his plate across the table and patted his hand. They talked quietly and contentedly sipped their coffee.

"In some ways," said Jack, "their relationship seemed much more beautiful than the young couple's. You could tell they'd been together many years. They had history – security. I thought to myself, Lord willing, that will be us in 30 years. And I wondered, when we get old, will you cut up my Danish for me?"

I smiled as I refilled his coffee cup. "As if I don't already," I said.

Much can be said for the comfort of a long-term relationship. Jack and I have been married for 34 years, all on this farm. I dare say because of the farm we've spent more time together than most married couples who make their living elsewhere. It has its advantages, but sometimes it dictates our lives.

Day by day treasures

The corn crop that suffered during this summer's drought is now ready to harvest. Ironically, constant rain has made combining a challenge. Friday was the only dry day last week. The rain was forecast to return by Saturday afternoon. Jack focused on the opportunity to bring in enough corn to fill up our dryer bin. I knew he wasn't looking at the calendar thinking about our impending wedding anniversary.

I carried his lunch out to the field on Saturday. Dark clouds loomed on the horizon. I climbed up the ladder of the combine and handed him the food.

"Thanks," he hollered over the noise of the Gleaner. "Looks like I'll be rained out before too long. Do you want to go out for supper tonight?"

"Sounds good," I said. "Especially since tomorrow is our anniversary."

His eyes widened. He thumped the steering wheel with his fist. "Man! I was going to get you flowers." He glanced at the dark horizon. "But I have to keep going."

"It's fine," I said. "We'll take each other out for supper. No worries."

He apologized again as I climbed down the ladder. "Don't worry about it," I shouted. "It's all good." And to my surprise I meant it.

Walking to the house I thought back on our early years. Back then I probably wouldn't have reminded him. Then I could have given him the silent treatment until he figured out his mistake. There's nothing like a good dose of guilt to rekindle the romance.

Now I view birthdays and anniversaries differently. Sure, it's nice to do something special when you can. But the fact is that we're celebrating the ordinary. These are milestones that mark an accumulation of ordinary days and years, life as it normally occurs. It's in the ordinary that we find something special. What good is a big party or a candlelight dinner if there's nothing in our daily lives to celebrate?

The rain started just as Jack filled the last wagon. He parked the Gleaner, emptied the wagons and cleaned himself up. We slipped out for a quick dinner, at a nearby restaurant because he had to get back and check the dryer.

On Sunday morning we wished each other a happy anniversary. "I wonder how many cups of coffee we've shared," I said.

"I wouldn't want to guess," said Jack with a laugh. "We should probably be dead by now."

We filled the day with routine pleasures – going to church, visiting with my brother and sister-in-law. At day's end I took Rocky for a walk. The wind rustled through the corn still standing in the field and whipped coloured leaves across my path. A light rain tickled my face and I thought how absolutely wonderful "ordinary" felt.

Rocky tugged on the leash behind me. I turned to scold him, but I was suddenly distracted by a giant double rainbow shimmering directly over our farm. It was like a personal greeting from God – Happy Anniversary.

Now that's something special!

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ont.

Artful Eye

MARIANNE VANDERSPEK

ALL SOULS' DAY

Say November woods.
Say the colors of earth: ocher, sienna, umber,
a hearth where the fire's gone out.
Wind scours trees to their bones.
A chevron of geese cuts a wedge in the sky.
Imagine a hawk the color of winter.
On the day of the dead, he seeks a thermal
and soars. The dead rise, too,
will-o-the-wisps of mist & haze,
tobacco smoke from Indian pipes,
the plumes of tall grasses.
They are always with us,
tangible as breath,
fill the interstices of then and now.
In the November woods, cold air
settles like a blanket.
The sky tucks itself in.
Everywhere, the silence of all the folded
wings.

Barbara Crooker

Marianne VanderSpek is a farmer and photographer living in Florence, Ont.

Barbara Crooker is a poet living in Fogelsville, Pa. This poem previously appeared in West Branch *and is reprinted here with permission. Barbara's most recent book is entitled* More *and she's currently working on her next book. Check out* ***barbaracrooker.com****.*

Columns

Borderless

Brent van Staalduinen

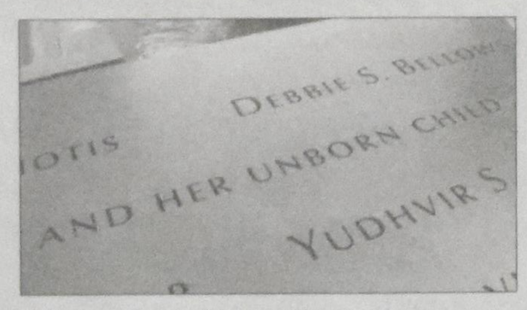
The borders we create

About ten years ago, an obscure literary journal published a short poem of mine entitled "On a Bench, Beside Myself," where a weary and world-wise Jesus plunks himself down on a park bench next to the poem's speaker and says some surprising things. A fellow writer sent a brief note complimenting me on the "duality" of my writing. The poem, she wrote, was most effective because it hovered between the expected attributes of Christ and the unexpected worldliness of his words.

That note gave me a new bit of vocabulary to describe the point of tension from which I try to write, the abstract boundary between belief, point of view, theme and motif. In the poem, my goal was to smudge the line between Jesus-on-the-bench and Jesus-of-the-speaker's-preconceptions and hopefully cause readers to view the poem's characters and themselves in a new and challenging way.

For me, faith is like that – full of lines and borders that exist to be defined and tested. I tend to see the world that way, too, even as those borders are created and destroyed (often in the same instant), rendering any duality we identify as false or at least incomplete.

My wife and I recently took some time away from touring New York to visit the 9/11 memorial. There, amongst the engraved names of the 2,983 victims, we encountered the words *AND HER UNBORN CHILD*. I was shattered. The line I drew in that moment was between terrorism and our unborn child, between my worldview and a belief system that would deny even the unborn a chance to receive a name, to exist as a person. Just as, in Pakistan, as I write this, doctors are trying to save the life of Malala Yousafzai, a 14-year-old girl shot by the Taliban for her outspoken views on gender coeducation. My first reaction: horror and anger. Here, too, I draw the line, razor-sharp, between the Taliban's faith and my own.



9/11 memorial, New York City.

Paradox

Yet those Islamic extremists – or indeed anyone we see as opposite to our own worldview – are merely incendiary examples of a paradox between religions and cultures and nations. The extremists create borders by saying, with shouts and explosions, *WE ARE NOT YOU!*, while at the same time obliterating the borders – as though they were little more than vapor – to scorch us right where we are.

And our response? We often do the same, albeit with disdain rather than suicide vests or bullets, matching paradox with paradox, unable or unwilling to recognize that blindly creating or crossing over those borders can be dangerous to ourselves and to our most cherished beliefs. Hate can draw and erase lines. Violence can do the same. Love, too.

But we aren't called to hate or violence, are we? And any idea of Christlike unity that seeks purely to erase the false duality we create has to be measured against a fallen world that doesn't think of borders the way we do. We tend to think of borders as clear boundaries that can be stretched between nations, cultures and religions, but the roots of our faith tell us that often those lines aren't easily defined. And, if we're really honest, we have to admit that the Bible is comfortable with a flexible response to the many types of borders humans create. To our limited way of thinking – and to the skeptics who highlight this as Christianity's greatest weakness – the Bible's contextually-determined response can seem arbitrary or fragmented, and knowing where to begin can be a daunting task indeed.

However, the Biblical treatment of those borders is far from arbitrary. Even when the Bible varies its approach, it never pretends that those lines don't exist. The Bible *always* deals with borders and division, and it always treats them with love and grace, even while refining them with fire. I cannot imagine how much love and grace it would take the families and loved ones of the 11 pregnant women listed on the 9/11 memorial to move past their unspeakable grief. If Malala survives, it will be because love was cast across so many physical and figurative borders, but I will continue to be challenged by the Taliban's brutality and their ruthless interpretation of Islamic law.

Yet love and grace will move, and those impossibly difficult lines will be challenged and tested; I have to believe this. Christianity, I think, has the most important response to the paradox of our bordered world: the world starves for more love and grace, and we have an infinite supply. Trusting that love and grace will still guide the things we do and say is the only way to arrive whole on the other side of the borders we create and often don't know how to cross.

Brent and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont. and are expecting their first child. To find out more about Brent and his writing, visit ***brentvans.com.***

Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer

Love's anatomy

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2)

"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5: 44-45)

The backyard is carpeted in yellow, tailings of the dying season, but I think some fresh earth is being tilled in me. A truth I have heard my whole life and yet never *heard* seems finally to be sinking in. It has to do with love, that most nebulous of all mysteries, and my lack of it.

When I met and married my husband, when my baby was born – that was love. I knew it, and no one had to clarify or extrapolate its meaning. I understood then, as now, that love is choice and action, not just *f-e-e-l-i-n-g* (my mother's voice echoes in my ears), but that didn't need to be said when I held my newborn in my arms. I believe that love is a verb, and it is usually a pleasure to serve my family. My love for them unfurls into action as easily as a new leaf opens into daylight.

But then I come to that beautiful and weighty reversal from First Corinthians that tells us action without love is meaningless. Love requiring action I can see, but action requiring love – not just benefitting from it but being validated by it? – that's harder. If my efforts to serve or reach out are worthless without love, doesn't that nullify most acts of service altogether? The truth is, I don't love. I don't love the poor or downtrodden in my community. I don't love the drug addicts, the convicts, the homeless. I don't even love the dogmatic or overly opinionated most of the time. At some level I have been waiting for God to fill me with love so that service can spill over from its excess. It's not so much that I have been waiting for that f-e-e-l-i-n-g, but at least for a motivation beyond my usual apathy.

If my efforts to serve or reach out are worthless without love, doesn't that nullify most acts of service altogether?

As God so loved

While pondering my love problem this week, another issue crept into my site line from a different direction. Someone recommended a book written by a former Planned Parenthood director who turned pro-life after witnessing an ultrasound-guided abortion. I devoured *Unplanned* in two days and began to have sleepless, anxiety-riddled nights over the abortion issue. It is very hard not to see pro-choice supporters as enemies, and I don't begin to know how to love someone who vehemently, publically, defends abortion. When I imagined myself serving in a pro-life context, I became even more desperate about my inability to love those I'd be called to serve. Without love, would my service be nothing but a clanging gong? Goodness knows, the abortion debate has more than its fair share of clanging gongs on either side.

Abbey Johnson speaks at pro-life rally.

And then, at just the right moment, a wise person pointed out a distinguishing characteristic of the love question. *Who* exactly have I been called to love? Is God saying, "Emily, if you have the gift of compassion and can fathom all the complexities of the abortion issue, and if you fervently believe that abortion is wrong, but have not that lovin' feeling for the entire pro-choice population, you might as well do nothing about it"? Or is he asking me to love HIM? This should have been obvious to me – it's not as if I haven't heard it before – but the twelve inches between my head and heart is slow going sometimes. If I love God, then my acts of service have meaning, even if my emotions don't immediately comply.

I do love God, although even that is not always a feeling. I love the world he has made, the truth he has spoken, the grace he pours out, even to me. I want – more each day – to be Christ-light in this world of darkness. It's the only thing worth being. When Abby Johnson, the author of *Unplanned*, witnessed that fateful ultrasound-guided abortion, she ran straight to the Coalition for Life volunteers who had been standing outside her abortion clinic for eight years. I'm sure those volunteers didn't always feel love for her, director of that very institution they were protesting, promoter of thousands of abortions, enemy of their cause. But because of the God they did love, they chose to treat her with patience, kindness, humility and respect. I can do that. They chose to serve. I can do that. They *chose* love. In my context, with God's help, I can do that too.

Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and daughter and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She has had weeks of red eyes over Unplanned *and Viktor Frankl's* Man's Search for Meaning.

Columns

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien

Two-tong grilling and German smoked corn

Some of the agriculture and food-related articles in the news lately had me shaking my head. Why does every person who gets sick from eating spinach, beef or something that has E. coli on it make the national news immediately?

Do the "outraged consumers" over the beef recall at the XL Foods plant in Alberta practice safe hygiene when they are handling and cooking raw meat? Do they flip their burgers over on the grill with the same utensils from raw meat to the finished product? Do they guess when the patty is cooked enough by looking at it?

Flipping the raw burger and using that same utensil again without washing it in hot soapy water is done all the time, and most folks don't realize that this can cross-contaminate bacteria. Yet they wonder what happened at that slaughter plant, which had 22 food inspectors working each shift. That plant processed 300 to 400 cattle per hour. E. coli comes into slaughter plants either in the manure on the hides of cows, or via the animal's intestines. It's a tough business to be in and many plants in Canada have closed their doors.

Why does every person who gets sick from eating spinach, beef or something that has E. coli on it make the national news immediately?

Cross-contamination occurs when food (and ready-to-eat food) comes in contact with pathogenic bacteria, chemicals or unwanted material making the food unsafe to eat. Always use separate tongs or utensils to handle raw and cooked meat. Do not place cooked meat onto plates that contain raw meat juices. Ground beef is the biggest risk because it's made up of parts from many different cattle, all mixed together.

It's just as dangerous to eat a cantaloupe without washing it first in hot, soapy water. Yet how many consumers do that? And from surveys I've seen, many folks would prefer to drink unpasteurized milk directly from the cow. Now that's playing Russian roulette.

Germany's corn going up in smoke

Corn is also in the news a lot these days. If you're a big operator and raising thousands of pigs or cattle and you don't like the high price of corn, you can import it. That's what Prestage Farms and two other livestock companies in North Carolina are doing. They signed deals to import 750,000 tonnes of corn from Brazil. No expensive bagged feed for their hogs or chickens!

While farmers and meat packers in the U.S. and Canada lobby for a reduction in corn demand to produce ethanol, farmers in Germany are growing corn for fuel like never before. The farmers are happy and doing well financially because of the government's alternative-energy subsidy. *Ontario Farmer* reports that German farmers grow crops that are chopped up to feed biogas-producing digesters that generate electricity. Land that was growing crops for cattle or used as sheep pastures is now growing corn to generate electricity. Germany has a goal of deriving 80 percent of its electricity and 60 percent of its overall energy needs from renewable resources by 2050.

The Renewable Energy Act in Germany is subsidizing the energy produced through these facilities for 20 years. As a result, some dairy farmers are forced to feed their cows imported soy meal from Brazil and chicken producers are importing corn.

Eight years ago, when there was overproduction of commodities, this program was devised to set up small eco-power plants to run on corn. Each biogas facility needs 200 hectares of corn, and now the nation grows 810,000 hectares of "energy corn." That's over two million acres of corn going up in smoke. Every crop other than corn is becoming more expensive, even potatoes. Competition by investors bidding up land to grow corn is causing strife for original farm owners. And, even worse, corn growers are abandoning crop rotation to grow corn on corn, at the cost of losing song birds and wild life habitat. Thankfully, many Germans recognize the program as being an environmental disaster, as farming the marshes releases carbon, and fermented corn waste from the facilities applied to the fields is causing groundwater nitrate pollution.

Recently, a group of academic researchers called for an end to the program, even as the biogas plants continue to be built. They said that the inefficiency of the land use to generate electricity through biogas is far below that of wind and solar.

Too bad the researchers had to find out the hard way. Did they not know farmers would grow what is the most profitable: subsidized energy corn. See why I shake my head in disbelief when food makes the news?

Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew-area farmer and agricultural writer. He recently took on the job of bulletin editor at the Renfrew CRC.

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

Gospel blimps and bytes

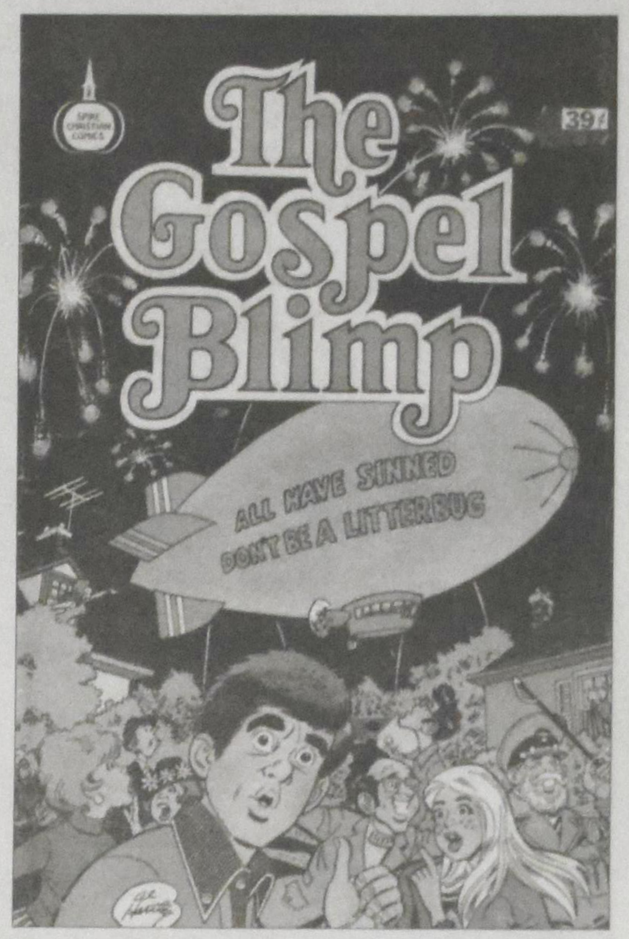
With the rise of the web and social media, churches have gradually established an online presence. Some churches have simple static webpages, while others have developed impressive websites with captivating images and dynamic content. Some churches have ventured into providing online sermons and using mailing lists, blogging and social media. These media can serve church members in a variety of different ways: providing updates, sharing congregational news, posting events, updating members on church programs and also for informing visitors about church programs and worship times.

But how effective is the web for evangelism? Should churches focus on websites and social media to reach out to unbelievers? This approach seems appealing; after all, the web is the most efficient way of connecting with millions of potential visitors. But is this an effective medium for reaching un-churched people with the good news of the gospel?

In 1960, Joseph Bayly wrote *The Gospel Blimp*, a story about well-meaning Christians who construct a blimp equipped with large signs and a loud speaker to broadcast the gospel to the their neighbours. George and Ethel have un-churched neighbours and pray that they will hear the gospel message through the blimp. But their neighbours actually find the blimp annoying. In a concluding chapter to the story, Bayly writes that the blimp represents "every external, impersonal means by which we try to fulfill our responsibility to witness to our neighbours." In the 1960s, this included media such as billboards and tracts. Today, the gospel blimp could represent efforts to use the web, especially when it acts as a substitute for personal witness and involvement. At the end of the story, their neighbours become Christians, but not through the blimp. Rather, it was through acts of kindness and through demonstrations of how the gospel was real to George and Ethel in their lives. Bayly observes that the remarkable spread of the gospel after Pentecost occurred long before the invention of the printing press and electronic media. He concludes that we ought not pass our "personal responsibility on to blimps and loud speakers and impersonal organizations."

Living letters

In his book *God and Gadgets*, Brad Kallenberg argues that human communication requires three conditions: time, place and bodies. These are things that technology "bewitches us into thinking we can ignore." Sharing the gospel works best in conversation where an exchange of ideas can take place. This is very different from a webpage which presents ideas instantaneously in bulk



The medium matters, as this cartoon (1974) demonstrates.

format, in what Kellanberg calls the "dump-truck" approach. Kallenberg observes that online evangelism is much less effective once it is disconnected from people and "floats around in cyberspace to fend for itself." Kallenberg asserts that "Nonbelievers will not mistakenly stumble into a church web site any more often than they mistakenly stumble into the church building." They will most likely visit a church through the invitation of a friend – a situation requiring real human interaction.

It seems that the best way for someone to understand the gospel is to read our lives and observe our behaviour, not only individually, but also as a community. This point is made by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians where he writes: "You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3). Although the apostle John uses the medium of writing, he observes that face-to-face communication is much better. In 2 John 1:12, he writes: "I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

Like gospel blimps, gospel websites are a poor substitute for personal evangelism. Kallenberg concludes: "There simply are no technological surrogates for actual human beings living with each other in a cruciform manner transparent enough for the neighbours to see." Jesus ultimately came and walked among us. John 1:14 says "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." Although the gospel can be communicated using bytes (and blimps), it seems that living bodies are better suited for communicating the gospel message.

Dr. Derek Schuurman is a computer science professor at Redeemer University College. He is currently serving on the outreach team at his local church.

Classifieds

Ordination Anniversary

On October 28, the congregation of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton celebrated with

Pastor Henry Kranenburg

and his wife Marnie and their children the **25th anniversary** of his ordination as Minister in the Christian Reformed Church.

We thank God for his years of faithful and diligent service to the congregations of Bethel CRC in Brockville and Immanuel CRC in Hamilton. He also served Classis Eastern Canada and Classis Hamilton in various capacities and the CRC denomination.

Pastor Henry: We wish you and your family God's blessings in the years to come.

Church Anniversary

Willowdale Christian Reformed Church
of Toronto, Ont.,
will be celebrating **50 years** of God's faithfulness as a congregation with a church Open House, dinner, and a special worship service being planned for the weekend of
Saturday and Sunday
October 19th & 20th, 2013.

If you are a past member and you have **special memoirs and/or past pictures** that you would like to share with us or if you would like to find out further information about these events, please email us at fifty@willowdalecrc.com, keep an eye on our website:
www.**willowdalecrc.com**
or call the church office at 416-221-7829.

Personal

"Young" Christian lady in her mid 50's, with energy and a zest for life seeks to meet a genuine, outgoing man for friendship and possible relationship.
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Anniversary

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1947 November 5 2012

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Obituaries

Weeping may endure for a night,
but joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5b

Suddenly on Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2012, the Lord called home our much loved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather

Albert Snippe
in his 82nd year

Dearly missed by his wife Freda and children
John & Kathy Snippe – Allendale, Mich.
Sylvia & John McLaughlin – High River, Alta.
Diana & Jamie Van Dyke – Owen Sound, Ont.
Robert Snippe – Brantford, Ont.
Deb & Rob Thornton – Alliston, Ont.

Lovingly remembered by 16 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Home address: 77 White Bark Way
RR 1 Belwood, ON NOB 1J0

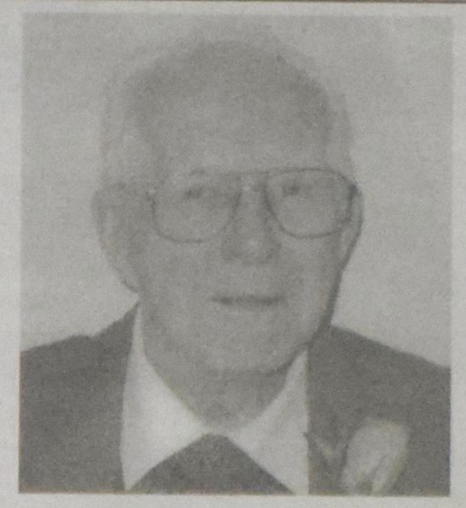
Rie Nanninga (nee Weessies)

Peacefully entered into the presence of her Redeemer, Jesus the Lamb of God, on Monday, Oct 22, 2012 at Bowmanville Hospital in her 90th year.

"I know that my Redeemer lives!" Job 19:25

Survived by her loving husband Derk Nanninga of 65 years;
Together with their children:
Gerda (Dave) Repol of Whitby;
John (Karen) Nanninga of Markham;
Rick (Elizabeth) Nanninga of Brighton;
grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
She will always remain a treasured memory in all our hearts.
A celebration of her life took place on Oct 24, 2012.
In lieu of flowers, an expression of sympathy may be made in the form of donations to Glen Hill Terrace Inc. at Long Term Care Centre, 200 Glen Hill Dr. S., Whitby ON L1N 9W2

We invite you to mail a card to:
Derk Nanninga
c/o Kingsway Arms Retirement Centre
218-65 Clarington Blvd.
Bowmanville ON L1C 0A1



John Hiemstra

March 2, 1924 Onstwedde, Holland
October 3, 2012 Telkwa, B.C.

On Wednesday, October 3rd, the Lord called to himself our beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

He was a man of faith who sincerely believed in God's grace and taught his family to love God and others.

Beloved husband of Riemke Hiemstra (nee Huisman) for over 62 years.
Loving father of:
Annette & George Dehaan
Ida & Thys Jaarsma
Sylvia & John Mensonides
Johanna & John Bain
Thelma & Jim Amsing
Jennifer & Steve Gehl
Ann Rita & Ed Aasen
Geraldine & Ken Bouwman
Pake to 36 grandchildren and spouses and 33 great-grandchildren.

Ps. 91:14-16
"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation."

Correspondence: Riemke Hiemstra
P.O. Box 92
Telkwa BC V0J 2X0
"*Seine fen de Heare*".
(Blessings from the Lord)

Annual Dutch Christmas Carol Service

December 2
at Emmanuel Reformed Church,
170 Clarke St. **Woodstock**.
Service starts at 3 p.m.
Meditation by Mr. Ralph Koops.
Babysitting provided.
Fellowship and refreshments following the service.

Looking for a unique and meaningful gift for a special person this holiday season?
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Saturday November 17th (10am – 4pm)
at the Ontario Christian Gleaners
1550 Morrison Rd, Cambridge, Ont.

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Visit our website: **ontariogleaners.org**

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R/L

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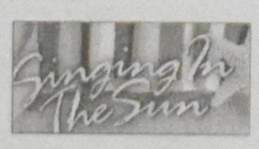

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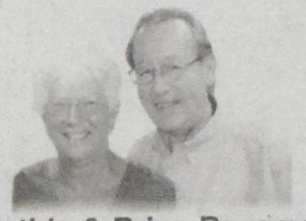

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 10 Listowel & District Right To Life's Annual Silent Auction & Fundraiser Dinner. Bethel CRC, **Listowel**. See ad p.16 for details.

Nov 17 Handel's Messiah, Georgetown Bach Chorale, Goderich. See ad.

Nov 18 Handel's Messiah, Georgetown Bach Chorale, Brampton. See ad.

Nov 23 Handel's Messiah, Georgetown Bach Chorale St Elias Ukrainian Church, Brampton 8 pm. See ad.

Nov 23 Handel's Messiah, Georgetown Bach Chorale St Elias Ukrainian Church, Brampton 3 pm. See ad.

Dec 2 Annual Dutch Christmas Carol Service at Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. **Woodstock**.Service starts at 3 p.m. Meditation by Mr. Ralph Koops. Babysitting provided. Fellowship and refreshments following the service

Dec 8 Musica Sacra Chorus, Arise Shine for thy Light has Come, 8 p.m. Hope CRC, Brantford, Ont. See ad next issue.

Dec. 9 - Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster will be preaching. DVDs are available.

Dec 22 Musica Sacra Chorus, Arise Shine for thy Light has Come, 8 p.m. Church of the Epiphan, 560 Dundas St., Woodstock, Ont. See ad next issue.

Handel's Messiah

For many people Messiah is a traditional musical experience. For some it is a religious or spiritual experience. For others it sets the mood for Christmas. Whatever the reason may be we are compelled year after year, century after century to listen to and experience the music of Handel's greatest Oratorio "Messiah" .The Georgetown Bach Chorale, now in its 13th season, offers you a beautifully honed and marvelously crafted rendition of this timeless masterpiece which Handel wrote in a mere 24 days. The discipline and mark of a great composer, conductor, tradesman or artist is always "How to Reinvent the Wheel?" and create a sparkling piece of art. Messiah has often been performed with huge choirs and earth shaking volume that could wake the dead! However, the Georgetown Bach Chorale offers you a new vision of this timeless piece…a more subtle and crafted version, with 19 singers, crystal clear arias, Baroque instruments, and meticulously articulated choruses, just as Handel would have created in his day with his original 16 singers. In this performance you will also hear additional movements and orchestral colours that Mozart added to this work to give it a more classical "shine". The Chorale's sound is elegantly accompanied by a period chamber orchestra of Baroque specialists, complete with violins with gut strings, an historic trumpet, a rarely seen and heard viola da gamba, royal timpani playing; all being led from one of two harpsichords by Ron Greidanus.

For performance dates and times, see ad below.

St. Elias Ukrainian Church in Brampton is a stunning all wooden structure complete with onion domes and wonderful scripture inspired ceiling paintings will have you spellbound!

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Handel's Messiah

Saturday, November 17, 2012,
North United Church, Goderich 7:30 pm ($25, Students $10)

Sunday, November 18, 2012,
Christ Church Anglican, 4 Elizabeth St. N., Brampton 4 pm

Friday, November 23, 2012,
St. Elias Ukrainian Church, 10193 Heritage Rd., Brampton 8 pm

Sunday, November 25, 2012,
St. Elias Ukrainian Church, 101 Heritage Rd., Brampton 3 pm ($30, Students $10)

Christmas doesn't seem complete without the Chorale's annual presentation of Handel's most innovative oratorio "Messiah". Come and enjoy highly spirited choruses, lyrical arias and the very dramatic interpretation of this timeless work. This platter of audible delicacies is not to be missed. In this musical feast, with two harpsichords, Baroque organ, period strings – including viola da gamba – and transcendental choral and solo work, the Bach Chorale creates an evening designed to make Advent complete.

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A cloud of witnesses: Two women speak on leadership and ministry

De Bruyn and Van Die.

A look back at the Women's Federation

Marguerite Van Die

In 1958, Christian Reformed women in Canada founded the Women's Federation, a national organization with regional and congregational sub-groups. Marguerite Van Die (*CC*) interviewed former President of the Women's Federation Truus de Bruyn, now 93 and living in Fairhaven Manor in Peterborough. De Bruyn has lost her sight but retains her insight into denominational history.

How did women have the time and energy to organize themselves in this way in 1958?

We wanted to build on our Reformed faith as good citizens in a new country. The wife of our home missionary, Mrs. Florence Moes, suggested that the women [in Peterborough] organize a ladies society as they had had in the Gereformeerde Vrouwenbond in the Netherlands. They promptly met at her house, and organized themselves as "Mary and Martha." This group is still going strong, and will celebrate its 60th anniversary next year.

We met to discuss the Bible, to explore theological and religious questions, to socialize and talk about all those everyday matters that are so important to women, many of whom were young mothers.

Tell us about your personal involvement in the Federation.

Like the other women, I had a very busy life for I was a mother of eight, and my husband and I both worked at the Civic Hospital in Peterborough. In 1970, when the children no longer needed as much attention, I agreed to serve as the President of the Federation. I did this until 1978.

How did you do this work on top of a full-time job as nurse?

As the old saying goes, I did it by "burning the midnight oil" after everyone was in bed. Sometimes this meant writing an editorial for *Christian Woman,* and although it was a challenge I somehow never missed a deadline thanks to "the midnight oil."

DON GENGE

De Bruyn giving a convention speech in North York, circa 1978.

What accomplishments have meant the most to you?

It was hard to know [at the time] what the impact was on those who attended. Years later, I was surprised how often I would meet someone who would tell me how much those gatherings had meant to her.

A second accomplishment of which I really am proud is that we organized a committee at the national level to deal with public affairs of concern to our women. I remember that at one of our conventions some spoke out about the clubbing of seals, which was then a topic much in the news. I suggested they form a committee to take their concerns to the federal government. We also sent, on behalf of all the women of the Christian Reformed Church, a brief to the Minister of Health and Welfare outlining our opposition to abortion. Such social action on the part of our Christian Reformed women in Canada was quite unique and not part of their experience in the Netherlands. For us it was a way to widen our horizons and be a meaningful public witness as women.

Given such success, why did the Federation disband in 1998?

We felt it had really accomplished its goal of being a bridge and a bond among immigrant women. While today there has been a great decrease in the number of ladies societies, in some places the regional collective meetings are still ongoing. In October, the Peterborough Mary and Martha Society hosted such a gathering.

Marguerite Van Die, whose mother was a close friend of Truus de Bruyn, is Professor emerita of history and religion at Queen's University, Kingston, Ont. She encourages history students, and anyone interested in the immigrant past, to interview others of de Bruyn's generation so that the treasure trove of their personal stories is preserved.

Coffee Break leaders Jane deBolster, Renee Beswitherick and Tieneke deBoer (l to r).

No app for that (yet): Coffee Break today

Bethany Van Lingen

Marian Lensink is a ministry developer at Coffee Break. She works to help small groups flourish. She works with Home Missions in what is now a volunteer position. But Lensink considers the work she does with small groups and Coffee Break to be her calling, just as the leaders who founded Coffee Break felt called.

Coffee Break started in 1970 in South Holland, Illinois. It was launched at Peace Christian Reformed Church. Pastor Alvin Vander Griend and his team decided, through prayer, to begin using the Bible to connect with their neighbours, many of whom were not believers.

The church already ran a children's program called Story Hour. The moms who dropped their kids off for the program would often linger to talk with each other. The leaders at Peace CRC decided to invite these women to a Bible study, and they called it Coffee Break.

In the first year, ninety newcomers joined Coffee Break. Peace CRC began to share its program with other churches three years later. These days, Coffee Break is international, and has spread outside of North America. For over twenty years already, women and men in Korea have been holding Coffee Break groups. Coffee Break Bible study groups have also sprung up in China, Japan, East Asia and Mongolia.

Christian Courier interviewed Marian Lensink of Burlington, Ontario. Lensink continues the work of Vander Griend and his team by supporting Coffee Break groups and training leaders throughout Central and Eastern Canada.

What is Coffee Break?

Coffee Break is an inductive Bible study, meaning that we at Coffee Break go to God's Word directly, rather than using a devotional or studying from a book. Coffee Break is also evangelistic. We reach out to women who don't know Jesus and have them study the Bible with us.

Marian Lensink speaks to Barrie First's CRC Coffee Break in September.

Why did you join Coffee Break? What has it meant for you?

When my husband and I joined the First Christian Reformed Church in Barrie, I became part of a women's Bible study. The women there had heard about Coffee Break and how well it worked. We wanted to start our own group. We wanted to invite more people to our Bible study. Our first session of Coffee Break, we had 40 or 50 people show up!

I led my first newcomer's group soon after. It was 1988 and I was teaching with my infant son in my arms. I have been involved with Coffee Break for about 20 years. I have been a ministry developer for over seven years.

What impact is Coffee Break having on women?

Coffee Break is a place for women. We are developing the leadership potential in women and that has definitely had an impact on how they approach their role in the church.

How is Coffee Break changing with this generation, compared to how it has been structured in the past?

Women have so much less time these days to engage with Scripture. They are out working and just not able to come to Coffee Break. I love Jesus so much more because of the ways I was able to dig deeply into Scripture in Coffee Break. We need to learn to do life together. God's word still speaks to us and we need to engage it.

People are connecting on Facebook groups for Coffee Break. They are doing life together through social media. Many Coffee Break groups meet during the day, a time that is convenient for moms. But some groups have started meeting in the evenings or other times so that women who work can attend. This is not widespread, but churches are trying to adapt to the culture that they are in.

Bethany Van Lingen (bethany.vanlingen@gmail.com) is a third year Bachelor of Journalism student at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ont. She is a member of Maranatha CRC in Cambridge, Ont.